A photograph of a man in a red and white checkered shirt holding a large, colorful banner. The banner features the words "OPEN FOR BUSINESS TO EVERYONE!" repeated in a grid pattern. The background shows a building entrance.

Raising Arizona

Kerry Calls on Brewer to Veto Anti-Gay Law

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US warns Russia against Ukraine intervention

MATTHEW LEE

AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States on Wednesday warned Russia against a military intervention in Ukraine, saying such a move would be a “grave mistake,” as troops in western Russia were placed on

sions between Russia and the West over Ukraine and were likely to fuel already-heightened Russian suspicions over Western intentions in its backyard. Kerry insisted, however, that that U.S. policy toward Ukraine, Georgia and the other states that once

And that’s a very powerful force.” Noting that Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday ordered large-scale military exercises in what many see as a show of force or possible prelude to intervention in Ukraine, Kerry said it would

out specifically mentioning Russia, Earnest also called on others in the region to end “provocative rhetoric and actions.” On assistance, Kerry said it was “urgent to move forward” to help Ukraine but also said it was urgent for Ukraine’s interim authori-



British Foreign Secretary William Hague listens at right as Secretary of State John Kerry speaks at the State Department in Washington. The US on Wednesday warned Russia against a military intervention in Ukraine, saying such a move would be a “grave mistake,” as troops in western Russia were placed on high alert for massive new war games in the area, including near the Russian-Ukrainian border.

(AP Photo/ Evan Vucci)

high alert for massive new war games in the area, including near the Russian-Ukrainian border. In delivering the blunt message, Secretary of State John Kerry also announced the Obama administration was planning \$1 billion in loan guarantees for Ukraine and would consider additional direct assistance for the former Soviet republic following unrest that led to the ouster of its Russian-backed president. Kerry also renewed U.S. demands that Moscow withdraw troops from disputed enclaves in another former Soviet republic, Georgia, and urged Georgia to further integrate with Europe and NATO. The warning, aid announcement and nudge westward for Georgia all came amid growing ten-

made up the Soviet Union was not aimed at reducing Russia’s influence in its neighborhood. Instead, he maintained that U.S. encouragement for former Soviet states to integrate with the West was driven by America’s desire to see their people realize aspirations for freedom in robust democracies with strong economies. “This is not ‘Rocky IV,’” Kerry said, referring to the iconic 1985 Sylvester Stallone film in which an aging American boxer takes on a daunting Soviet musclem-an. “It is not a zero-sum game. We do not view it through the lens of East-West, Russia-U.S. or anything else. We view it as an example of people within a sovereign nation who are expressing their desire to choose their future.

be hypocritical for Moscow to send troops into another country after spending the last several years opposing foreign military action in places like Libya and Syria. “For a country that has spoken out so frequently in the last year ... against foreign intervention in Libya, Syria, elsewhere, it would be important for them to heed those warnings as they think about options in the sovereign nation of Ukraine,” Kerry said. “Any kind of military intervention that would violate the sovereign territorial integrity of Ukraine would be a huge, a grave mistake. And the territorial integrity of Ukraine needs to be respected.” White House spokesman Josh Earnest urged “outside actors” to respect Ukraine’s sovereignty. With-

ties to enact reforms, curb corruption, and prepare free and fair elections. He said the planned \$1 billion in U.S. loan guarantees would be accompanied by additional aid to be determined later in consultation with Congress, as well as about \$1.5 billion from the European Union, along with loans from global financial institutions. Kerry made the comments in a round-table interview with a small group of reporters at the State Department where he presided over a meeting of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission earlier Wednesday. At that meeting, he announced additional, but unspecified, U.S. assistance “to help support Georgia’s European and Euro-Atlantic vision.” □

Ex-President Jimmy Carter planning trip to Venezuela

JOSHUA GOODMAN

Associated press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter is expressing concern about Venezuela’s escalating political crisis and wants to meet with leaders on both sides in an upcoming trip.

Carter, a mediator of past political conflict in the deeply polarized South American nation, made the offer in private letters he sent this week to President Nicolas Maduro and opposition leader Henrique Capriles.

Expressing “grave concern” about the loss of life in recent protests and the risk of more conflict ahead, Carter in the letter to Capriles said that for dialogue aimed at easing tensions to succeed both side must “send signals of their willingness to alleviate the present state of tension.”

For the opposition, that means making clear its commitment to act within constitutional limits and strongly reject violence, the Nobel peace laureate wrote. In turn the government must guarantee the right to peaceful protest and impartial justice for jailed protesters.

“It is difficult for elected officials from opposition parties to resolve differences when they feel threatened and persecuted,” Carter wrote. The Carter Center has been a frequent observer of elections in Venezuela and mediated talks between the socialist government and opposition following a 2002 coup that briefly unseated then President Hugo Chavez.

Carter is accepted by the normally anti-American government — Maduro praised him at a news conference Friday. But some members of the opposition harshly criticized the Carter Center for validating a 2004 recall referendum that Chavez won amid complaints that the process leading up to the vote unfairly favored him. □

Judge won't block round of BP payments

KEVIN MCGILL
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—A federal judge refused Wednesday to halt payments from a BP fund to compensate deckhands and other seafood workers harmed financially by the 2010 Gulf oil spill, turning back arguments by the oil giant that the payment process was tainted by a lawyer's alleged fraud.

BP argues the \$2.3 billion it agreed to put into the oil spill seafood compensation fund was inflated, based on the belief that Texas attorney Mikal Watts represented more than 40,000 clients.

BP claims that more than half of the Social Security numbers on Watts' client list were fake. Watts' attorney has denied that Watts committed fraud. More than \$1 billion of the fund has been distributed in an initial round of payouts. BP wanted a second round of payments suspended.

However, U.S. District Court Judge Carl Barbier said a suspension was unnecessary. He said the second round, for which no date has been set, is at best months away. Barbier added that the people Watts claimed to represent were deckhands and other workers who usually worked temporary jobs with little or no documentation of past employment and scant means of proving losses. Such clients would likely not account for a large percentage of the \$1 billion-plus left in the fund, he said.

"They were at best the tail wagging the dog. Maybe the flea on the tail wagging the dog," Barbier said.

Barbier did grant a request from Watts' lawyers for a delay in BP's lawsuit against Watts, agreeing to put that matter on hold at least temporarily while a criminal case against Watts unfolds. Watts' criminal lawyer Robert McDuff has said in court filings that if the BP suit continues while the criminal investigation is underway, he would advise Watts not to testify in depositions regarding the lawsuit. □

Obama seeks money for aging infrastructure

MICHAEL D. SHEAR
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ST. PAUL, Minn. - President Barack Obama on Wednesday was expected to call on Congress to overhaul corporate and business taxes as a way to pay for a four-year, \$302 billion transportation bill to repair and replace the nation's aging roads, rails, bridges and tunnels.

Obama was to travel to a renovated transit hub in St. Paul to pitch the plan. On Tuesday, the president made the case for the funding privately to House Speaker John A. Boehner in an hourlong Oval Office meeting, according to officials with knowledge of the conversation.

In his State of the Union address last month, Obama pledged to use money from a tax overhaul to "create jobs rebuilding our roads, upgrading our ports, unclogging our commutes, because in today's global economy, first-class jobs gravitate to first-class infrastructure."

New legislation to pay for transportation is a priority for both parties because the nation's Highway Trust Fund is nearing insolvency. Anthony Foxx, the transportation secretary, has said the trust fund could begin "bouncing checks" by this summer. That would force a halt to construction projects around the country, officials have said.

But differences remain un-

resolved about how to pay for the work.

Boehner, who has said that Republicans are eager to overhaul and simplify the corporate tax system, nonetheless expressed skepticism to Obama on Tuesday about the president's proposal to finance transportation spending

he is seeking to business taxes. The White House has so far declined to be specific, and Republicans in the past have balked at administration proposals to use revenue from closing tax loopholes.

"So, a tax hike?" one senior Republican aide on Capitol Hill quipped when

of months. House Republicans on Wednesday released their own proposal for a broad tax overhaul that would cut the top corporate income tax rate from 35 to 25 percent and reduce the number of individual income tax brackets to two from seven. A spokesman for the House



From left: Mark Fuhrmann, a program director, gives Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx and President Barack Obama a tour of the Metro Transit Light Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility in St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 26, 2014. Obama toured the transit hub in St. Paul and delivered remarks calling on Congress to overhaul corporate and business taxes to pay for a four-year, \$302 billion transportation bill to repair and upgrade aging roads, rails, bridges and tunnels.

(Gabriella Demczuk/The New York Times)

with business tax changes, officials said. Obama argued that the transportation bill will create jobs and help increase economic growth, they said.

Republicans on Capitol Hill on Wednesday morning said they want to see more details from the president about the changes

asked about the transportation proposals.

Still, some members of both parties have expressed some optimism about the eventual possibility of a compromise on a transportation bill, even in an otherwise gridlocked Congress whose members are facing re-election in a matter

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee said lawmakers would review the president's proposal. White House officials said Obama's plan would use savings from business tax changes for a one-time, \$150 billion infusion of cash into the trust fund to make it solvent. □

Justices rule against man in protest near base

ADAM LIPTAK
© 2014 New York Times

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court on Wednesday unanimously ruled against an antiwar protester who was convicted of breaking federal law by entering an area set aside for protests near the main entrance to Vandenberg Air Force Base, from which he had been banned.

The court's opinion, by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., involved the interpretation of a federal law that made such re-entries a crime, and it turned on an assessment of the

scope of a base commander's authority over property controlled by the military. The court declined to address the First Amendment questions in the case, although two concurring justices indicated that they were substantial.

The case will now return to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, in San Francisco, for further proceedings on the constitutional question.

The defendant in the case, John D. Apel, had been barred from the base in Santa Barbara County, Calif., after earlier convictions

for vandalism and trespassing. He argued that those orders should not have applied to an area open to the public on the other side of a painted green line that separates the closed part of the base from the Pacific Coast Highway.

The 9th Circuit court agreed, ruling that the federal government could not enforce the law because Apel had been standing on property partly controlled by the state and the county. "The federal government lacks the exclusive right of possession in the area on which the tres-

pass allegedly occurred," said the unsigned 9th Circuit opinion.

It overturned Apel's conviction, which had required him to pay \$355 in fines and fees.

Roberts rejected that interpretation of the law.

"We decline Apel's invitation," the chief justice wrote, "to require civilian judges to examine U.S. military sites around the world, parcel by parcel, to determine which have roads, which have fences, and which have a sufficiently important, persistent military purpose." □

Texas gay marriage ban latest to be struck down

CHRIS TOMLINSON

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A federal judge declared a same-sex marriage ban in deeply conservative Texas unconstitutional Wednesday, the latest in a series of victories for gay rights activists who are challenging bans in dozens of states around the U.S.

The Texas ruling will allow the second-most populous U.S. state to continue enforcing the ban pending an appeal that will likely go to the U.S. Supreme Court, where a tangled web of lawsuits is expected to end up next year. It follows similar recent decisions in Utah, Oklahoma and Virginia, as proponents of same-sex marriage have been emboldened by last year's landmark Supreme Court ruling that said legally married gay couples could not be denied federal benefits. Judge Orlando Garcia issued a preliminary injunction Wednesday after two gay couples challenged a Texas constitutional

amendment and a long-standing law.

"Without a rational relation to a legitimate governmental purpose, state-imposed inequality can find no refuge in our United States

Constitution," Garcia wrote. "These Texas laws deny plaintiffs access to the institution of marriage and its numerous rights, privileges, and responsibilities for the sole reason that

Plaintiffs wish to be married to a person of the same sex."

Garcia said the couples are likely to win their case and the ban should be lifted, but said he would not

enforce his ruling pending one by a court of appeals, which already is hearing two other states' cases. He also will give Texas time to appeal to a federal appeals court.

Garcia, appointed by President Bill Clinton, is the first judge in his conservative New Orleans-based court to reach such a decision. Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, who also is the leading Republican candidate to succeed Gov. Rick Perry, promised to appeal the decision.

Todd Staples, a candidate for lieutenant governor who drafted the Texas constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, denounced the court's decision.

"I am disappointed that judicial activism is once again trying to trump the will of the people. This ruling is the poster child of the culture war occurring in America today," he said. At least 17 states, mostly in the Northeast, and the Washington capital district now allow marriage of same-sex couples.

The Supreme Court, in its decision last June, declined to rule on the merits of a voter-approved California law that defined marriage as between a man and a woman. The effect of the decision was to allow same-sex unions to resume in California, but the high court said nothing about the right to marry. It did order the federal government to recognize valid same-sex marriages by striking down the part of the Clinton-era Defense of Marriage Act that denied same-sex married couples the federal benefits and rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

Every judge who has decided a same-sex marriage case since last year's Supreme Court ruling has come down on the side of gay marriage and has drawn heavily on the high court's opinions.

That has left opponents of gay marriage scrambling, and some have called for extraordinary measures in response. □



Cleopatra De Leon, left, and partner, Nicole Dimetman, right, arrive at the U.S. Federal Courthouse, in San Antonio, where a federal judge is expected to hear arguments in a lawsuit challenging Texas' ban on same-sex marriage. On Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014, Judge Orlando Garcia has struck down the ban but is leaving it in place pending a ruling by an appeals court later this year. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

Kerry Calls on Brewer to Veto Anti-Gay Law

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

America's top diplomat predicted that the U.S. Supreme Court would strike down an anti-gay proposal in Arizona if it ever becomes law and called Wednesday on the state's governor to "make the right decision" and veto it. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer was weighing whether to approve or veto a law that would protect people who assert their religious beliefs in refusing service to gays. In Washington, Secretary of State John Kerry was asked on the MSNBC network about whether the bill undermines U.S. criticism of a new law in Uganda that punishes gay sex with up to life in prison.

Kerry said he hoped Brewer would veto the proposal by a Saturday deadline.

"I'm counting on the governor," Kerry said. "I cannot imagine how that law would withstand the scrutiny of the Supreme Court

of the United States. So I would hope that, you know, she'll make the right decision."

The former Democratic

has been made and that America would stand up for gay rights worldwide.

Similar religious protection legislation has been intro-



Josh Deinert, a graphic designer at Fast Signs, shows an anti-Senate Bill 1062 sign that reads "Open For Business To Everyone", Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014 in Phoenix.

(AP Photo/Matt York)

presidential nominee and Massachusetts senator said recognition of gay rights has not had an easy path in the U.S., but he said enormous progress

has been made and that America would stand up for gay rights worldwide. Similar religious protection legislation has been intro-

duced in several states, but Arizona's plan is the only one that has passed. The bills have been drawn up by opponents of same-sex marriage who are

scrambling to find effective responses to a rash of court rulings that could force some of America's most conservative states to accept gay nuptials. Brewer was holding a series of private meetings Wednesday with opponents and proponents of the legislation as business groups, gay rights supporters and even fellow Republicans urged her to use her veto power. There is widespread speculation that Brewer will veto the bill, but she has not said how she'll act.

As pressure mounted on the governor to veto the legislation, a federal judge declared Texas' ban on gay marriage unconstitutional, but he left it in place until an appeals court can rule on the case. A wave of lawsuits has been filed against voter-approved bans on same-sex marriage in conservative states like Arizona, where voters approved a ban in 2008. □

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In this Jan. 23, 2014 video frame grab released by the Miami Beach Police Department, shows singer Justin Bieber, right, as he gestures to a police officer while under arrest at the Miami Beach police in Miami Beach, Fla. The Miami-Dade county prosecutors released about 10 hours of video, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014. Bieber pleaded not guilty to driving under the influence, resisting arrest and driving with an invalid license.

(AP Photo/Miami PD HO)

Bieber jail video displays an unsteady walk after arrest

CURT ANDERSON
AP Legal Affairs Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Justin Bieber walks unsteadily and even appears to stumble while performing a sobriety test shortly after his January arrest on driving under the influence and other charges, according to police video released Wednesday. Only a few moments depict Bieber in the roughly 10 hours of video released by Miami-Dade County prosecutors following public records requests from The Associated Press and other news organizations. The videos were recorded at the Miami Beach Police Department shortly after Bieber and R&B singer Khalil Amir Sharieff were arrested during what officers said was an illegal street drag race in exotic sports cars. They were not charged with drag racing, however. In one clip, Bieber — dressed in a dark hoodie with the hood over his head, dark baggy shorts and bright red shoes — wa-

vers as he tries to walk carefully and slowly heel to toe. He stumbles slightly as he turns and appears to have his arms out for balance. In a second try he stumbles again, even reaching out to a wall for support, and has an animated face-to-face conversation with a police officer in which both point fingers at each other. There are only brief glimpses of the pop singer's face and no close-ups in the medium-quality video, which also included no time codes to determine how long he underwent the sobriety tests. Other brief clips show Bieber being walked through various parts of the police station, and one previously released video depicted the 19-year-old singer being patted down by an officer. None of the videos have any sound. Sharieff is also depicted in some segments, sitting quietly in a chair and watching Bieber undergo the sobriety test. □

Missouri:

Man executed in '89 rape, killing of teen

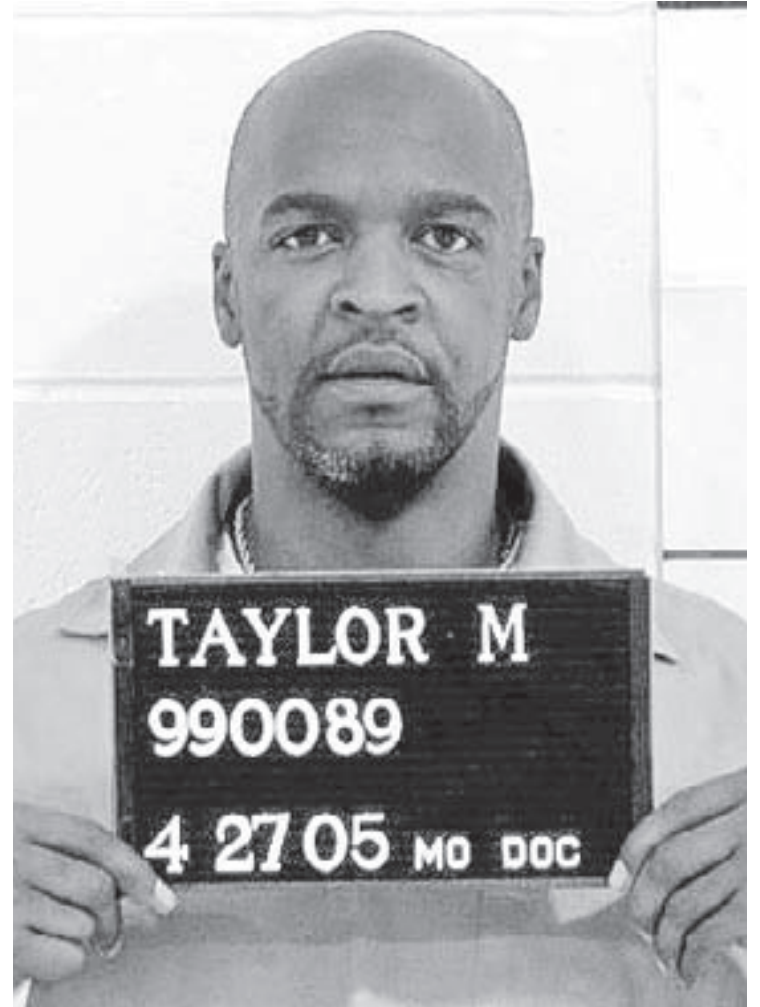
JIM SALTER
Associated Press
BONNE TERRE, Missouri (AP)

— A Missouri inmate was executed early Wednesday after Federal courts and the state's governor refused last-minute appeals arguing that the execution drug purchased from an unnamed compounding pharmacy could have caused inhuman pain and suffering.

Michael Taylor, 47, who was convicted of abducting, raping and killing a 15-year-old girl as she waited for her school bus in 1989, was pronounced dead shortly at 12:10 a.m. His victim, Ann Harrison, was in her driveway — carrying her school books, flute and purse — when she was abducted by Taylor and Roderick Nunley. Nunley also was sentenced to death and is awaiting execution.

Taylor offered no final statement. He mouthed silent words to his parents, two clergymen and other relatives who witnessed his death. As the lethal injection process began, he took two deep breaths before closing his eyes for the last time. There were no obvious signs of distress. Ann's father and two of her uncles witnessed Taylor's execution. They declined to make a public statement.

In their appeals, Taylor's attorneys questioned Missouri's use of an unnamed compounding pharmacy to provide the execution drug, pentobarbital. They also cited concerns about the state executing inmates before appeals were complete and argued that Taylor's original trial attorney was so overworked that she encouraged him to plead guilty.



In this file photo from the Missouri Correctional offices is convicted killer Michael Anthony Taylor of Kansas City who was put to death in Missouri on Feb. 26.

(AP Photo)

After using a three-drug execution method for years, Missouri switched late last year to pentobarbital. The same drug was used in three previous Missouri executions, and state officials said none of the inmates showed outward signs of distress. Still, attorneys for Taylor said using a drug from a compounding pharmacy, which unlike large pharmaceutical companies are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, runs the risk of causing pain and suffering during the execution process. The Oklahoma-based compounding pharmacy Apothecary Shoppe agreed last week

that it wouldn't supply the pentobarbital for Taylor's execution, which left Missouri to find a new supplier. Attorney General Chris Koster's office disclosed that a new provider had been found. But Koster refused to name the pharmacy, citing the state's execution protocol that allows for the manufacturer to remain anonymous. Taylor's attorneys said use of the drug without naming the compounding pharmacy could cause the inmate pain and suffering because no one could check if the operation was legitimate and had not been accused of any violations. □

US Education Corner:

The Bane and the Boon of For-Profit Colleges

EDUARDO PORTER

© 2014 New York Times

Marc Jerome, the executive vice president of Monroe College, says his business is being unfairly targeted as corrupt.

The graduation rate at Monroe's two New York campuses, in the Bronx and New Rochelle, is much higher than those at nearby community colleges. More than 9 out of 10 of recent graduates tracked by the school in its latest survey either continued their

universities that lure poor, unprepared students with misleading ads that promise good jobs on graduation but discharge them with limited employment prospects and a crushing burden of debt.

For-profit colleges have come under a barrage of negative publicity, been targeted by government investigators and been dragged into congressional hearings. They are on notice from the Education Department, which is

said.

For-profit colleges in many states are lightly regulated, and some have engaged in egregious fraud, including deceptive marketing. They tend to charge higher tuition than community colleges, which get direct funding from states. Their students take on more debt, have a tougher time repaying it and suffer higher unemployment rates. Still, Jerome makes an important point: Private for-profit institutions are in-

They have achieved these gains even though their students are poorer and more diverse than those attending state institutions and private nonprofit colleges, according to research by David Deming, Lawrence Katz and Claudia Goldin of Harvard University.

They are better than community colleges at graduating students from two-year programs. And they are more nimble at tailoring their courses to the shifting realities of the job market.

The Education Department hopes to regulate the sector as vocational education. Under federal law, all programs offered by for-profits - like nondegree certificate programs at other institutions - must prepare students for "gainful employment in a recognized occupation" to remain eligible for federal aid.

Until the Obama administration took office, nobody had bothered to codify what "gainful employment" meant. But proposed new rules that the Education Department submitted to the White House in January, after months of debate with both advocates for and critics of the sector, will define it in terms of students' ability to repay their college debt.

Degree programs at for-profits will pass the test - and retain eligibility for federal student aid - if the default rate of their students remains less than 30 percent, according to the last draft released by the department.

And graduates' debt service will have to consume no more than 8 percent of their earnings and 20 percent of their disposable income.

This approach satisfies few. For-profit colleges say they are being held to a higher standard than public and nonprofit institutions, whose degree programs don't have to meet any such requirement.

Jerome also complains that such colleges are being pulled in different directions by different regulators: Even though the federal government may define Monroe to be vocational, New York state requires it, like any other college, to offer liberal arts credits that may not immediately turn a profit in the job market.

D'Agati, the state education official, sympathizes. "You can't just offer a course where all 60 credits are how to weld," he said. "But that also means you can't turn around and say, 'OK, but your student didn't get a job as a welder.'" □



King Hall at Monroe College in the Bronx borough of New York, Feb. 25, 2014. The Education Department is expected to issue specific new regulations this year for for-profit schools like Monroe, which have come under a barrage of negative publicity recently.

(Anthony Lanzilote/The New York Times)

education or found jobs; the survey was responded to by about 70 percent of graduating students, most of whom are low-income blacks and Latinos. And Monroe students have a lower default rate on student loans than the national average for public schools.

And yet, a frustrated Jerome told me, the college founded by his grandfather 80 years ago is being singled out as one of the bad guys: private, for-profit

expected to issue specific new regulations for them later this year.

"That is not good public policy," Jerome said. "Targeting only for-profit institutions and exempting public or nonprofit institutions with poor outcomes is ultimately more harmful to the students the administration is seeking to protect and could ultimately drive them to schools with lower graduation rates, higher default rates" and weaker potential for future earnings, he

dispensable players in U.S. higher education, filling a gap that other schools neglect. The goal should be to improve the sector, not shrink it.

For-profits make up the fastest-growing segment of higher education, accounting for 20 percent of the two-year associate's degrees granted in the U.S., up from 8 percent two decades ago. Their share of bachelor's degrees has risen to 7 percent, from virtually nothing.

"They can very quickly develop a curriculum and hire faculty to offer a credential in, for instance, how to work in a clean room in a nanotech facility," John D'Agati, deputy commissioner for higher education at the New York state Education Department, told me. "In traditional colleges you have an internal process that is very slow."

Most important, nobody else is stepping up to fill the growing demand for a higher-education degree.



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Data-breach costs take toll on Target 4Q

A. D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Target Corp.'s massive data breach over the holidays helped push its fourth-quarter profit down 46 percent.

The discount retailer also said Wednesday that sales fell 5.3 percent as the breach scared off customers.

The nation's second-largest discounter also offered a profit outlook below Wall Street expectations as the costs of the breach that affected millions of credit and debit card customers linger.

The discounter, based in Minneapolis, said it earned \$520 million, or 81 cents per share, for the three months that ended Feb. 1. That compares with a profit of \$961 million, or \$1.47 per share a year earlier.

Revenue fell to \$21.5 billion from \$22.7 billion. Revenue at stores open at least a year, an important retail measurement, fell 2.5 percent.

Analysts had expected a profit of 80 cents on revenue of 21.5 billion, according to FactSet estimates. The breach resulted in \$17 million of net expenses in the fourth quarter, Target said, with \$61 million of total expenses partially offset by the recognition of a \$44 million insurance receivable. □

US Financial Front:

American sales of new homes up in January

M. CRUTSINGER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. sales of new homes rebounded in January to the fastest pace in more than five years, offering hopes that housing could be re-

tivity would be held back by bad winter storms in many parts of the country. Sales had fallen 3.8 percent in December and 1.8 percent in November, leading to worries that the housing recovery could be

73.7 percent surge in sales in the Northeast. Sales were up 11 percent in the West and 10.4 percent in the South. The only region to see a sales decline was the Midwest where sales fell 17.2 percent, likely a re-

by a healthy 13.4 percent in 2013. That was the largest calendar gain in eight years. Economists are looking for further sales gains as the economy continues to gain momentum and more people are able to get jobs. Further gains in home sales will spur more jobs in the construction industry and help to support economic growth.

The National Association of Realtors reported last week that sales of existing homes plummeted in January to an annual rate of 4.62 million units. That was down 5.1 percent from the December pace.

Freezing temperatures and snowstorms caused a slip in housing activity this winter while higher mortgage rates and higher prices had acted to slow growth earlier in the year.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage rose to 4.33 percent last week, up from 4.28 percent the previous week. Rates surged about 1.25 percentage points from May through September, peaking at 4.6 percent. Those increases began after the Federal Reserve signaled last spring that it would expect to start slowing its bond-buying program before the end of the year.

Those Fed bond purchases were designed to keep long-term interest rates low to stimulate more borrowing and give the economy a boost. □



A 'Sold' sale sign hangs in front of a house in Mount Lebanon, Pa. The Commerce Department released positive new home sales data for January on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014.

(AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

gaining momentum after a slowdown last year caused by rising interest rates. Sales of new homes increased 9.6 percent in January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 468,000, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday. That was the fastest pace since July 2008.

The rise came as a surprise to economists who had been forecasting a sales drop in January, in part because of a belief that ac-

losing momentum. The big January gain was likely to ease those concerns. Many economists believe sales of both new and previously occupied homes will rise in 2014, helped by an improving economy and job gains which will boost the number of people working. The median price of a new home sold in January was up 3.4 percent from a year ago to \$260,100. The sales gain was led by a

flexion of winter blizzards that hit the region. Sales for all of 2013 rose to 428,000, the highest point in five years and an increase of 16.3 percent from 2012. Economists expect sales to grow more in 2014 although they do not expect the gain to be as robust as the 2013 increase. Price increases are expected to moderate in 2014 as well. The Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index rose

US safety agency likely to probe GM

TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The U.S. government's auto safety watchdog likely is looking into whether General Motors was slow to report problems that led to 13 deaths and a massive recall of small cars. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has the authority to fine the company at least \$35 million for not being forthcoming with information. GM on Tuesday doubled

man wouldn't say what action is being considered or comment further. Since undergoing a painful bankruptcy in 2009, GM has removed layers of bureaucracy, improved the quality of its vehicles and is quicker to issue recalls when problems occur. However, its admission that its processes were lacking 10 years ago shows how the old culture can still haunt the automaker. "The chronology shows that the process employed

switch to move out of the run position and shut off the engine and electrical power. That can knock out power-assisted brakes and steering and disable the front air bags. The problem has been linked to 31 crashes and 13 front-seat deaths. In the fatalities, the air bags did not inflate, but the engines did not shut off in all cases, GM said. It was unclear whether the ignition switches caused the crashes, or whether people died because the



Cars move along an assembly line at the General Motors Fairfax plant in Kansas City, Kan. The U.S. government's auto safety watchdog likely is looking into whether General Motors was slow to report problems that led to 13 deaths and a massive recall of small cars.

(AP Photo/Orlin Wagner)

to 1.6 million the number of small cars being recalled to fix faulty ignition switches linked to multiple fatal crashes. The company also issued a rare apology, saying its process to examine the problem was not robust enough. The safety agency said in a statement Tuesday that it is reviewing GM documents and has questions about when GM found the ignition defect and when it notified regulators. Documents filed by GM show it knew of the problem as early as 2004. "NHTSA will monitor consumer outreach as the recall process continues and will take appropriate action as warranted," the statement said. A spokes-

to examine this phenomenon was not as robust as it should have been," GM North America President Alan Batey said in a statement. "Today's GM is committed to doing business differently and better." On Feb. 13, GM announced the recall of more than 780,000 Chevrolet Cobalts and Pontiac G5s (model years 2005-2007). Then on Tuesday, it doubled up, adding 842,000 Saturn Ion compacts (2003-2007), and Chevrolet HHR SUVs, Pontiac Solstice and Saturn Sky sports cars (2006-2007). Most of the cars were sold in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. GM says a heavy key ring or jarring from rough roads can cause the ignition

air bags didn't inflate. According to a chronology of events that GM filed Monday with NHTSA, the company knew of the problem as early as 2004, and was told of at least one fatal crash in March of 2007. GM issued service bulletins in 2005 and 2006 telling dealers how to fix the problem with a key insert, and advising them to warn customers about overloading their key chains. The company's records showed that only 474 vehicle owners got the key inserts. GM thought the service bulletin was sufficient because the car's steering and brakes were operable even after the engines lost power, according to the chronology. □

Delta to measure dollars instead of miles in frequent flier program

Kelly Yamanouchi
© 2014 Cox Newspapers

ATLANTA -- In a major change to its frequent flier program, Delta Air Lines will soon begin awarding free flights based on dollars spent, rather than miles flown. The move by Atlanta-based Delta is aimed at rewarding its higher-spending customers, an acknowledgement of how valuable those deep-pocketed travelers are to the company. It's also a competitive move to attract lucrative business travelers as Delta jockeys against other carriers, including United and American, for those customers.

"We'd like to provide more benefits to our premium customers," said Jeff Robertson, vice president of the Delta SkyMiles program. "A lot of our customers fly us 10, 20 times a year, and we should reward them for that."

Meanwhile, those most likely to not benefit from the new program, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2015, are bargain-hunting travelers who earn thousands of miles by flying long distances across the country on cheap fares.

It's a historic change for frequent fliers who for decades have earned flights based on miles flown. Starting next year, the average Delta frequent flier will earn five miles for every dollar spent on a Delta flight. That means for a \$300 fare, travelers will earn 1,500 miles.

But some other frequent fliers will earn more miles per dollar spent.

Those who use the Delta SkyMiles American Express credit card will earn seven miles for every dollar spent. And elite-level frequent flier members can earn anywhere from seven to 13 miles per dollar spent, depending on whether they are at silver, gold, platinum or diamond levels and if they have the Delta credit card.

"There will be some people who will be unhappy. ... The folks who travel infrequently and buy the least expensive fares will not earn as many SkyMiles credits as they used to," said Hudson Crossing travel industry analyst Henry Harteveltdt. "Those who travel on higher fares, in particular business travelers, and those who travel more frequently will benefit."

There will be no change for miles already earned in customers' frequent flier accounts, and the way travelers redeem miles for flights will remain much the same.

Delta's move comes after Southwest Airlines made a similar shift to awarding points based on dollars spent, and after Delta this year started requiring a minimum level of spending annually to reach elite levels in its frequent flier program. Hotel loyalty programs and others have also already added a spending component, Robertson said.

But Delta is the first U.S. legacy carrier to make the change, and other airlines are likely to closely watch the move.

Delta's change, announced Wednesday, is likely to cause some concern and confusion for some its frequent fliers.

"With any change comes challenges," Robertson said, adding that it is difficult to predict how many customers the airline may lose or gain through the change.

Delta's frequent flier program has long been a point of frustration for many customers, with some complaining that it's hard to schedule free trips even after they've earned the mileage. □

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Israel takes risk with airstrike on Hezbollah

JOSEF FEDERMAN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel has opened a new front in its attempts to halt weapons smuggling to Hezbollah, striking one of the group's positions inside Lebanon for the first time since the sides fought a war eight years ago.

This week's airstrike, meant to prevent the Islamic militant group from obtaining sophisticated missiles, is part of a risky policy that could easily backfire by triggering retaliation. But at a time when the Syrian opposition says Hezbollah has struck a major blow for President Bashar Assad's government in neighboring Syria by ambushing al-Qaida-linked fighters there, it shows the strategic importance for Israel of trying to break the Syria-Hezbollah axis. For now, the odds of a direct conflagration between Israel and Hezbollah appear low. The group has sent hundreds of fighters to Syria and is preoccupied with saving Assad's embattled regime. Syrian state media reported that army troops killed 175 rebels, many of them al-Qaida-linked fighters, near Damascus on Wednesday, but the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a prominent opposition group, said it was Hezbollah forces that carried out the dawn ambush.

Israel considers both Hezbollah and the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front to be grave threats. With a lack of good choices, Israel has avoided taking sides in the Syrian war, and in the short term, is content watching the two sides beat each other up. But in the long run, officials have expressed concerns about the battlefield expertise that Hezbollah

has gained. Officials also suspect that despite repeated Israeli airstrikes on suspected arms shipments,

Hezbollah has managed to get its hands on many sophisticated weapons, including Russian-made

anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles, ensuring that any future conflict with Israel will be far more intense than

previous rounds of fighting. "The type of scenario we have to plan for is extremely robust," said an Israeli military official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was discussing an intelligence assessment. "It means the Israeli operational response has to be forceful, swift and decisive."

Israel and Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Shiite group committed to Israel's destruction, battled to a stalemate during a monthlong war in the summer of 2006. Both sides have avoided any direct confrontation since a U.N.-brokered cease-fire ended the fighting, but each has been gearing up for renewed clashes.

Hezbollah rained some 4,000 rockets and missiles on Israel in 2006, mostly short-range, unguided projectiles. Israel believes the group now possesses 100,000 rockets and missiles. □



Israeli soldiers take a break at their position near the border with Syria in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014. Hezbollah says Israel carried out an airstrike targeting its positions in Lebanon near the border with Syria earlier this week, claiming it caused damage but no casualties. The Wednesday statement was the group's first acknowledgement of the reported Monday night airstrikes.

(AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

Syrian state media say army killed 175 rebels

ALBERT AJI

BARBARA SURK

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP)

— Syrian army troops on Wednesday killed 175 rebels, many of them al-Qaida-linked fighters, in an ambush described as one of the deadliest attacks by government forces against fighters near Damascus, according to state media.

An opposition group said the dawn ambush — part of a government effort to secure the capital — was carried out by the Lebanese Hezbollah group, which has been instrumental in helping President Bashar Assad's regime push back rebels entrenched in

the suburbs of the capital city.

Syrian state news agency SANA quoted a field commander in the eastern Ghouta area as saying most of the rebels killed in the assault near Oteibah lake southeast of Damascus belonged to the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front rebel group. The report said several of those killed were foreign fighters who came to Syria from Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and Qatar.

SANA said the operation dealt "a smashing blow to terrorists," a term Syrian state media uses for rebels. The agency posted several photographs on its website showing dozens of bod-

ies of men, some with leg wounds, lying in a dirt track of an open field. Some were wearing fatigues, but most wore civilian clothes and appeared to have been carrying bags of clothes and bottles of water that were scattered on the ground, suggesting they were changing locations when they were ambushed.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 152 rebels were killed, most of them Nusra Front and other fighters from Islamic brigades. "This is the heaviest loss for Nusra Front and Islamic brigades since the start of the revolution," said

Rami Abdurrahman, director of the rights group.

The Observatory, which has been documenting Syria's nearly three-year conflict by relying on activists' reports on the ground, said Hezbollah fighters backed by Syrian troops carried out the ambush. Few other details emerged.

Reinforcing that report, Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV aired exclusive footage of what it said was the ambush, showing at least two large bombs that were detonated along the route used by the opposition fighters.

From a distance, people could be seen running in different directions following the blasts. □

United Kingdom: Man guilty of slaying soldier sentenced to life

SYLVIA HUI
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — An al-Qaida-inspired extremist was sentenced to life without parole Wednesday for hacking an off-duty British soldier to death on a London street in front of horrified passers-by.

The self-described "soldier of Allah" was sentenced at Central Criminal Court along with his accomplice, 22-year-old Michael Adebowale, who was sentenced to life with a minimum of 45 years in jail because of his age and lesser role in the murder.

— while Adebowale called out "that's a lie" as the judge told them they had been radicalized. Outside the court, protesters from two far-right groups erected gallows and demanded capital punishment for the two men.

attacked his torso, while Adebolajo attempted to cut off the soldier's head with a cleaver. Moments after the killing, Adebolajo was filmed by onlookers delivering a rambling monologue justifying the attack as he held the bloodied weapons. Rigby was killed because "Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers" — "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," he said in the video, which was broadcast around the world. In his testimony, Adebolajo told the court that he loved al-Qaida — though he never met its members. He also said he and Adebowale had decided to kill a British soldier and Rigby was the first they came across. Judge Nigel Sweeney said their actions were "sickening and pitiless" and resulted in a "bloodbath." He added that he was certain Adebolajo had no hope of rehabilitation. "You decided, between you, and in order to advance your extremist cause, to murder a soldier in public in broad daylight and to do so in a way that would generate maximum media coverage," he said. "You both gloried in what you had done." Rigby's family said after the sentencing that they were satisfied justice has been served. □



Police and servicemen gather outside the Old Bailey in London, Wednesday Feb. 26, 2014, after the sentencing of Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who were convicted of murdering 25-year-old fusilier Lee Rigby. Adebolajo, an al-Qaida-inspired extremist, was sentenced to life without parole Wednesday for hacking a British soldier to death on a London street in front of horrified passers-by. The self-described "soldier of Allah" was sentenced at Central Criminal Court along with his accomplice, 22-year-old Michael Adebowale, who received a minimum 45-year sentence. (AP Photo/PA, Sean Dempsey)

Images of Michael Adebolajo, 29, holding a butcher knife and cleaver with bloodied hands in the moments after the May 22 killing of Fusilier Lee Rigby shocked people around the world and sparked fears of Islamist terrorism in Britain.

The day ended in drama when both men were pinned to the ground and led out of the courtroom after scuffling with guards and shouting at the judge moments before their sentences were read out. Adebolajo yelled "Allahu akbar" — "God is great"

The pair was convicted in December of murdering Rigby, 25, who was walking near his barracks in south London when the men ran him over with a car. They then dragged his body onto the road, and repeatedly stabbed him with knives. Adebowale

China would use coal for Jamaica port

DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — A Chinese company wants to build its own coal-fired plant in southern Jamaica to generate the power needed for a hoped-for \$1.5 billion port that the Caribbean island envisions as helping transform its chronically sluggish economy.

During an update to Parliament, Transport and Works Minister Omar Davies said China Harbour Engineering Co. aims to power the transshipment port with coal "to provide lower cost electricity for the project." Jamaicans pay 42 cents per kilowatt hour.

The Chinese company aims to develop a transshipment port in a swath of southern Jamaica that would lure the deep-drafting ships expected to travel through the Panama Canal when its expansion is completed.

It is a key part of a development strategy Jamaica hopes would transform the island into a global logistical hub in coming years. Blueprints also call for an expansion of Jamaica's existing container terminal, airports and roads while the government creates special economic zones to lure companies and usher the island into the global supply chain.

The Chinese company has already applied for a license with Jamaica's environmental agency to begin geotechnical work in the Portland Bight area in southern Jamaica.

An environmental impact assessment still needs to be done to green-light the port project in coastal Portland Bight, home to the island's biggest protected area. Davies said tax incentives, a review of citizenship laws for investors, land acquisition and authorization for the coal-fired plant also had to be addressed before any agreement could be signed.

If agreements are concluded within a year, Davies said, the China-financed port would likely not be operational for an additional four years. □

Haiti judge: US citizen faces trafficking charges

TRENTON DANIEL
Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A U.S. citizen and her Haitian mother face child-trafficking charges after they were caught carrying thousands of dollars in cash and running an adoption agency without a license, a Haitian official said Tuesday. Judge Borgella Shoute said Farah Marlin and Yrose Pressoir were stopped last Wednesday by police with Haiti's child protection unit after they had just left the Hotel Karibe, a high-end hotel popular with foreigners. The mother and daughter had just handed over

two children, ages 3 and 4, to someone at the hotel in exchange for \$20,000 in cash, Shoute said. They also run an orphanage but its accreditation expired in 2010, she said. "Police were contacted, and they were ready to make the arrest," she said.

While reading over the file in her office, Shoute said it was unclear from the paperwork who received the children, who she said were taken into custody by the government's child welfare agency.

Authorities haven't said where Marlin lives in the United States.

Defense lawyer Michel Ange Asse said the two women are innocent. He said they collected the money to organize an adoption for an American couple.

"It was just a meeting with the future parents," he said. "They accepted the money for the adoption."

He said the orphanage is registered with the government as is an adoption agency they also run.

After meeting with the two women and their attorneys, Shoute said she plans to order Marlin and Pressoir held in prison while their case goes before an investiga-

tive judge, who will decide if the two will be formally charged.

An estimated 50,000 children in Haiti live in orphanages, in part because many parents give up children they can't afford to take care of. Many of the orphanages are poorly run and have little oversight, and an untold number are suspected of being involved in child trafficking.

The United Nations Children Agency recently estimated that at least 2,000 Haitian children were smuggled across the border into the Dominican Republic in 2009. □

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For NATO, a first: 5 female defense ministers

JOHN DAHLBURG

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO has registered a first in its long history, with five women among the defense ministers who turned up Wednesday to attend a policy-making meeting at the alliance's headquarters.

The latest woman to join the ministerial ranks was Italy's Roberta Pinotti, who was sworn in Saturday as her country's first female defense minister. The 52-year-old served as an undersecretary for defense in the just-ended government of Enrico Letta. First elected to Parliament in 2001, she is now a senator. She began her political career two decades ago as a lower-ranking official in what was then Italy's Communist Party.



From left, defense ministers, Albania's Mimi Kodheli, Netherland's Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Germany's Ursula von der Leyen, Norway's Ine Marie Eriksen Soreide and Italy's Roberta Pinotti pose for photographers prior to the start of a meeting of defense ministers of the North Atlantic Council at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014.

(AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

Pinotti joined Albania's Mimi Kodheli, Germany's Ursula von der Leyen, Norway's Ine Marie Eriksen Soreide and Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert of the Netherlands. A NATO official said the five constituted the largest number of women defense ministers to serve at one time since the 28-nation alliance was founded in 1949.

Before getting down to business with U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and their other male colleagues Wednesday afternoon, the women posed together for news photographers. At first, there were just four of them — until Soreide of Norway realized the Albanian minister was missing. Kodheli was quickly called over, and the picture snapping resumed. □

Uganda health minister: Gays will still get care

RODNEY MUHUMUZA

Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP)

— The medical workers who knew he was gay ignored him, attending to those who arrived after him as they openly gossiped about his homosexuality. Pepe Julian Onziema, a prominent gay activist in Uganda, said Wednesday he recently was forced to confront some nurses at a private clinic after they neglected to serve him in apparent hostility toward his sexual orientation.

Now that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has signed a new law imposing harsh sentences for gay sex, life is expected to become even more difficult for the country's homo-

sexuals, including getting health care. The Ugandan government has issued assurances that health workers will not discriminate against homosexuals, but some gays say they are not confident about that.

Uganda's health minister, Ruhakana Rugunda, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that gays will not be discriminated against by medical workers despite the strengthening of criminal penalties against homosexuals.

Rugunda said that a clause which would have required medical workers to report homosexuals to police was removed from the bill that became law on Monday.

"We are saying that as far as health is concerned,

they are at liberty," he said, talking about gays. "They should give full disclosure to their nurses ... We do not discriminate against patients on the basis of sexual orientation. That's why we are encouraging gay Ugandans to take advantage of the health systems."

But Onziema, who is one of the few openly gay Ugandans, said he and other homosexuals have experienced prejudice when seeking health care.

"I once went to a clinic where I stayed in the queue (line) for hours and people who came after me were being served," he said. "You stand in the queue and they ignore you. And you hear them saying,

'That is a gay person. We can't serve him. We shall not serve him.'"

The new law has already spread fear among gay Ugandans and many now are actively trying to flee the country, said Onziema. Inflaming rampant anti-gay sentiment in this East African country, a Ugandan tabloid newspaper on

Tuesday published a list of what it called the country's "200 top homosexuals," saying it wanted to expose gays and their sympathizers "in salutation to the new anti-gay law." That list included many people who previously had not identified themselves as gay, endangering their jobs and lives, said Onziema. □

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China backs forced labor lawsuit by Japanese

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's government accused Japan of failing to conclusively address allegations of forced labor during World War II and voiced support Wednesday for Chinese plaintiffs seeking to sue to Japanese companies in a Beijing court. The lawsuit brought by 37 former workers and their descendants, 69 years after the end of the war, comes as China-Japan tensions rise over territorial claims and their troubled history. While aggressively pursuing claims over disputed islands, Beijing has also sought to play up Japan's wartime guilt for which it says Tokyo has never shown proper contrition. Tokyo insists that postwar agreements settled cases of forced wartime labor, and

the Japanese government spokesman said Wednesday that the plaintiffs had "no case." But Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the issue remained unresolved.

"Forced labor is a grave crime which Japanese militarists committed during their World War II aggression. It is an issue which has yet to be properly solved," Hua said.

The lawsuit names Mitsubishi Materials Corporation and Mitsui Mining and Smelting as defendants and asks for compensation of 1 million yuan (\$163,000) for each defendant as well as apologies in the Chinese and Japanese languages to be placed with the country's major media outlets.

Beijing lawyer Kang Jian, who is representing the 37 plaintiffs, said they filed

their paperwork with the Beijing No. 1 Intermediate Court, but did not yet know whether they would get a hearing. Japan's wartime government systematically abducted nearly 40,000 Chinese citizens and forced them to work for Japanese companies for little or no pay to make up for a labor shortage at home. They were sent to mines, construction sites and factories operated by 135 Japanese companies, many of them among Japan's corporate giants today.

About 7,000 people died of malnutrition and mistreatment by their employers. Dozens of similar lawsuits brought in Japan were dismissed, although some were settled outside court. The lawsuit filed Wednesday is believed to be the first such action brought be-

fore a Chinese court.

Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga, speaking to reporters at his routine morning briefing, reiterated Tokyo's position that all such claims were settled by agreements between the two governments. "This is a matter between China and companies with China-related business, so it is a civil issue," Suga said. "However, I can say that since such problems were included in the Japan-China communique, there is no case," he said. "The individual rights for seeking (compensation) were included in the communique." Renewed frictions between Beijing and Tokyo arose in 2012 after Japan nationalized a group of tiny uninhabited islands controlled by Japan but claimed by China. □

Hong Kong chief: Fed uncertainty clouding outlook

KELVIN CHAN

AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's economic growth will pick up this year but remain under its long-term average, the Asian business center's finance chief predicted on Wednesday, warning that the global outlook is uncertain as the U.S. scales back monetary stimulus.

In his annual budget speech, Financial Secretary John Tsang forecast that Hong Kong's economy would grow 3-4 percent in 2014, boosted by additional government spending aimed at reducing income inequality. That's up from 2.9 percent in 2013 but lower than the 4.5 percent average over the past decade.

Mainland China helped underpin Hong Kong's growth last year as a tepid recovery in the major export markets of U.S and Europe dragged down its trade, Tsang said. Exports from the semiautonomous southern Chinese city to the U.S. shrank 4 percent and shipments to the European Union fell 1 percent.

Tsang warned of volatile financial markets and capital flows as the Federal Reserve trims its monetary stimulus.

"The U.S. economy may see some improvement in 2014," Tsang said. "Nevertheless, there is still uncertainty over the Federal Reserve Board's exit strategy and interest rate policy. Possible market fluctuations and the risk of reversal of capital flows will cast shadows over global economic growth this year." Because the world's biggest economy is showing signs of recovery, the Fed is reducing bond purchases that at their height totaled \$85 billion a month. Economists are divided about when exactly the so-called "tapering" will end and when the Fed will start raising interest rates.

"Ultra-low interest rates and abundant liquidity under the loose global monetary environment have exposed emerging markets to risks of all kinds, including bursting of asset-price bubbles, greater volatilities of stock prices and exchange rates and intensified inflation pressure," Tsang said. □

Man hacks ex-Hong Kong editor with cleaver

KELVIN CHAN

Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — The former editor of a Hong Kong newspaper whose abrupt dismissal in January sparked protests over press freedom is in critical condition after being hacked Wednesday by an assailant with a meat cleaver, police said.

Police said a man wearing a motorcycle helmet attacked Kevin Lau in a residential neighborhood and then fled on a motorcycle driven by another man.

Lau was hospitalized in critical condition with slashes in his back and legs, said Kwan King-pan, acting superintendent of Hong Kong Police.

Police did not announce any motive for the attack and appealed to the public for information.

Lau, 49, was named editor of the respected Ming Pao newspaper in 2012 but was replaced last month by a Malaysian journalist with no local experience. Lau was transferred to the parent company's electronic publishing unit. The move raised fears among journalists that the newspaper's owners were moving to curb aggressive reporting on human rights and

corruption in China.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association said it was shocked and angered by the attack, calling it a "serious provocation to Hong Kong press freedom."

the press is a growing concern in the semiautonomous Chinese city, where such rights are guaranteed by its mini-constitution. On Sunday, thousands of people took to the streets

from some newspapers over editorial stances.

Hong Kong slipped three places to 61st place on the latest World Press Freedom Index compiled by media watchdog Reporters With-



Medical staffs escort former Ming Pao chief editor Kevin Lau on a stretcher in a hospital in Hong Kong, China Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014. The former editor of the Hong Kong newspaper whose abrupt dismissal in January sparked protests over press freedom has been stabbed, police said on Wednesday. Police said a man wearing a motorcycle helmet "suddenly" attacked Kevin Lau on Wednesday morning with a meat cleaver and then fled on a motorcycle driven by another man. (AP Photo)

Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying visited Lau at the hospital and told reporters, "We strongly condemn this savage act." Freedom of speech and

to protest Lau's dismissal and other recent cases, including the ouster of an outspoken radio host and reports that Beijing-backed businesses were pulling ads

out Borders, which said Beijing's growing influence is jeopardizing media independence. Hong Kong ranked 18th on the group's inaugural index in 2002. □



As one of Carnival's major sponsors:

Aruba Bank greatly involved in last weekend's activities



ORANJESTAD - Aruba Bank, as one of Carnival's most important sponsors was ever-present during last weekend's activities, partnering with the Aruba Carnival Foundation to produce and present the Reina Grandi queen election where Aruba's Carnival Queen 60 was crowned. The bank was also involved in the presentation of the spectacular Lighting Pa-

rade in Oranjestad on Saturday night, and in the colorful, unforgettable Grand Annual Children's Parade in Oranjestad on Sunday. During Friday night's Reina Grandi queen election, the bank's Marketing & Public Relations Manager, Shanouille Bikker, served as jury member, representing of the bank. As such she enjoyed the honor of crowning Reina Cultural di Phil-



pinas, the Cultural Queen representative the Philippine community here. The bank's heartfelt congratulations were extended to Reina di Carnaval 60, the island's ultimate Carnival royalty Zuriah Flemming, and her first runner up Ziaziane Goeloe, representing the T.O.B Carnival group, and second runner up Thaina Lacle, representing the University di Aruba. Congratulations are also due to all participants who contributed so generously to the success of Aruba's Carnival activities last weekend.

On Saturday during the Lighting Parade and on Sunday during the Grand Annual Children's Parade, Aruba Bank as main sponsor enjoyed the pleasure and the honor of starting the parade hosting actors and actresses of the Ballet of Venevision, as the opening act for the festivity. With the World Cup in Brazil underway and in view of the fact that Aruba Bank is the sponsor of the game transmissions on TeleAruba, the bank invited Fuleco,



the FIFA World Cup mascot to participate in the Grand Annual Children's Parade in Oranjestad. Aruba Bank also sponsored BMW's band performance during the Last Lap of this year's Carnival parades.

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KvK offering lecture on new tax incentives!



ORANJESTAD - In order to promote the investment climate in Aruba, several new tax incentives have been introduced, including the special zone in San Nicolas. The Chamber invites you to an interesting lecture about this subject, which will be presented by Mr. Benno Oldenhof. The incentives are of course entitled to certain require-

ments. Join us and learn more about the possible benefits and influence of these adjustments on the business community. This informative lecture takes place Wednesday, March 5, from 11.45am - 2pm at the KvK Auditorium. The Guest Speaker Mr. Benno Oldenhof will present the lecture in English, at an entrance fee of only afl. 35, which includes lunch!

You may apply by sending an email to sueellen@arubachamber.com, mentioning your name and phone number. Please submit your registration and payment by Tuesday March 4, 2014, before 12:00 pm. Attendees will be registered on a first-come, first-served basis as seating capacity is limited. We hope to see you Wednesday, March 5! □



Jo Ann Is Having Twice the Fun!

PALM BEACH - Jo-Ann Williams, a guest of the Casino at the Radisson, was dealt a Royal Flush at the Caribbean Stub Poker table, winning her 10% of the progressive Jackpot, which equaled \$2,813 in addition to a \$500 payout on her bet. The dealer qualified with a pair of 2s, as Jo Ann's hand boasted the 10-J-Q-K-A of Hearts. "I was hoping to get a Royal Flush without the buy-card," she said, "but I'm not turning that one down!" Did Jo-Ann Williams' crystal ball tell her there was another Royal Flush in her very

near future? Her second Royal Flush was shared with best friend Celeste Carasquerro. The two ladies became big winners again when Jo-Ann bought a card, the J of diamonds, which contributed to her second Royal Flush, winning her 10% of the jackpot. She walked away from the table with \$2,463 in addition to a \$1,000 payout on her bet. "I am sending the universe a request for a third Royal Flush," she said, "three is my magic number." Pictured here Jo-Ann Williams and Celeste Carasquerro. □



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Recently, Linda & Jerry Malloy were honored as Distinguished Visitors after returning to Aruba for 10 consecutive years. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for between 10-and-19 years consec-

utive. Mr. Ricardo Croes representing Aruba Tourism Authority conducted the ceremony at the Marriott Ocean Club. Mrs. Linda commented that she will never change her vacation island for any other island. Top reason for returning provided by the honorees were they consider

Aruba to be the "Happy Island", the great weather, and Friendly Aruban Hospitality, white sand beaches and the local food. Mr. Croes from ATA, together with hotel Reps Juan Pablo & Lillian, helped honor Linda and Jerry at the Marriott Ocean Club. □



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Woods begins his road to the Masters

DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Florida (AP) — The PGA

Tour season began five months ago. The new year is two months old. And yet there's something about the Honda Classic that makes Tiger Woods and a collection of stars feel as though it's all about to get underway.

"I think once we get to Florida, I think we're all thinking about our way to Augusta," Woods said.

Six tournaments remain before the Masters, the first major of the year, and this is now serious business. It shows in the strength of the field at PGA National, with seven of the top 10 players from the world ranking.

The last time Woods, Phil Mickelson, Rory McIlroy and Adam Scott competed in the same tournament was the BMW Championship near Chicago last summer.



Golfer Tiger Woods tees off on the fourth hole during the Pro-Am round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Continued on page 20

Associated Press



In this Monday, Feb. 10, 2014 file photo, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Zack Greinke throws during spring training baseball practice in Glendale, Ariz.

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Arizona (AP) — It wouldn't bother Zack Greinke if he didn't have to travel for the Los Angeles Dodgers' opener against Arizona in Australia.

"I would say there is absolutely zero excitement

about it," Greinke was quoted as saying in a story by ESPNLosAngeles.com last weekend. "There just isn't any excitement to it. I can't think of one reason to be excited for it."

The Sydney Morning Herald

Zack Greinke no fan of Dodgers' Australia trip

reported that organizers of the series at the Sydney Cricket Ground on March 22-23 demanded an explanation from the Dodgers and Major League Baseball. Officials from the club and MLB assured them Monday that Greinke was speaking for only himself and not the entire team, according to the newspaper.

Greinke hasn't talked to other media about the comments. He told ESPNLosAngeles he understood the reason for the trip.

"It's a baseball thing," he was quoted as saying. "It's an ownership thing, spreading stuff around. That's what it's for, and it's for the greater good of baseball." Dodgers President Stan Kasten said Greinke's comments were rooted in his detailed approach to spring training and his meticulous adherence to routine. Both habits, Kasten said, make him a good pitcher and great teammate.

Greinke's teammates say they are looking forward to the trip.

"It'll be fun to see what Sydney has to offer," first baseman Adrian Gonzalez said. The trip is scheduled to start with a flight of about 16 hours from Phoenix after an exhibition against Colorado on March 16. The Dodgers are scheduled to return to Los Angeles on March 23 and play three exhibition games against the Los Angeles Angels before playing in MLB's North American opener at San Diego on March 30.

Continued on page 22

Ecclestone: No clash between F1 and NASCAR

The Associated Press

Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone says his series and NASCAR won't be competing for the same motorsport fans when they hold races 190 miles (300 kilometers) apart in November.

Ecclestone dismissed on Wednesday any clash between the series, after the top executive at Texas Motor Speedway called F1 "arrogant" for scheduling the United States Grand Prix in Austin on the same weekend that his track hosts NASCAR.

"I absolutely think it's foolish," said Eddie Gossage, the track president and general manager. "It's a shot fired by Formula One at NASCAR. I can't say I was surprised because Bernie Ecclestone does a lot of foolish things.

The thing he unfortunately doesn't recognize is there is an 800-pound gorilla

when it comes to major American motorsports. The 800-pound gorilla is NASCAR."

Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth will host NASCAR's Texas 500 on Nov. 2, the same day F1 will hold its only race in the U.S. this year. Fort Worth and Austin are about three hours apart at lawful driving speeds.

While Gossage thought a stronger stance by the management at Circuit of the Americas would have prevented the scheduling issue, Ecclestone believed it was a non-issue.

"I've also spoken to the people that run the race at COTA and their position is that they believe the NASCAR crowd is a different crowd to Formula One, different people, different customers," Ecclestone said. "At the end of the day they run a domestic series in America — we run a world champion-



In this Nov. 14, 2013 file photo, President and CEO of Formula One Management Bernie Ecclestone, center, arrives with his wife Fabiana Flosi at the Circuit of the Americas for the Formula One U.S. Grand Prix auto race in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

ship."

And that requires considerable logistical planning by F1 teams.

"We've a small problem they (NASCAR) don't have — we have six jumbo jets to move around all our equip-

ment, and we have to find the most sensible way to use them to do that," Ecclestone said. "We have to be efficient, and bear in mind we may also encounter problems at an airport. "There are issues that can

occur, but (Gossage) and other people do not realize these things. The race prior to the one in the U.S. is in Russia, in Sochi.

We've never been before, and we have to get out of there and into Austin. □

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Murray, Ferrer, advance to the 2nd round in Mexico

CARLOS RODRIGUEZ

ACAPULCO, Mexico (AP)

— David Ferrer and Andy Murray, the top two seeded players in the Mexican Open, advanced to the second round on Tuesday while American and third-seeded John Isner became the first major casualty of the tournament, losing 7-6 (4) 7-6 (5) to Croatia's Ivo Karlovic.

Ferrer, the favorite in Acapulco, had a convincing 6-2, 6-3 victory over Kazakh Mikhail Kukushkin while Murray overcame a sluggish start and claimed a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 win over Pablo Andujar, from Spain.

"I had a difficult start, it was 10 minutes in the match and I was down 5-0, but I started to play more aggressively to get the win and hopefully I can have a good week here", Murray said. "The first set was extremely challenging, he was dictating the points, but later on he was getting tired and put the pressure on him".

Murray, who played for

the first time ever in Latin America, lost his first three service games and fell into a 5-0 hole, but came back strongly to set up a match against Joao Sousa of Portugal.

"I played Joao once in Australia, he was new on the tour then and he has improved. He's playing good tennis, he's good on clay and on hard courts", added Murray. "He plays similar to Pablo, hopefully I can play aggressively from the start."

In the round-of-16, Ferrer, who is trying to win on Mexican soil for the fourth time in his career, will play Spanish compatriot Feliciano Lopez.

"I'm not thinking about the final, I'm only in the second round", Ferrer said. "Now I'm only thinking about playing my best tennis against Feliciano Lopez, he's a good player I need to give my best to beat him".

Ferrer, who now has a 4-0 record against Kukushkin, is coming off an impressive



Britain's Andy Murray returns the ball while playing against Spain's Pablo Andujar during a match of the Mexican Tennis Open championship in Acapulco, Mexico, Tuesday Feb. 25, 2014.

run in the past two weeks of the ATP tour, winning the Buenos Aires tournament and reaching the semifinals in Rio de Janeiro last week. "Playing in Buenos Aires was not in my plans", said Ferrer who replaced his countryman Rafael Nadal in Argentina. "I'm tired, but I will not be making any excuses, I need to take a rest now and get well for the rest of the tournament". Earlier, Karlovic served 15

aces to Isner fired eight in a match between two of the game's biggest servers.

"I'm very disappointed," a visibly upset Isner said after the match. "I wanted to do well in here, is a good surface for me, but I played against a guy who played well against me".

The 2.11-meter (6-foot-11) Karlovic now has a 3-2 career record against the 2.08-meter (6-foot-10) Isner, who's ranked 13th in the

world.

Sousa of Portugal came back to defeat Frenchman Adrian Mannarino 1-6, 6-2, 6-2.

South Africa's Kevin Anderson downed Stephane Robert of France 6-2, 7-6 (7) and will next play America's Sam Querrey. Also, Alexandr Dolgoplov, from the Ukraine, beat Canada's Vasek Pospisil 6-2, 6-2 and seventh-seeded Ernests Gulbis had a 6-1, 6-1 victory over Taiwan's Yen-Hsun Lu.

Latvia's Gulbis won his fifth career title last week in Marsella.

On the women's side of the combined ATP-WTA tournament, top-seeded Dominika Cibulkova had a 6-3, 6-4 win over Urszula Radwanska, from Poland, Eugenie Bouchard eliminated Shahar Peer from Israel 6-2, 6-2, American Victoria Duval had a 6-2, 6-4 win over Czech Iveta Melzer and Estonian Kai Kanepi prevailed 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 against Jana Cepelova, from Slovakia. □

Woods

Continued from page 18

That's how it was a generation ago, when some of golf's top players either rested or played overseas early in the season, and then showed up in tropical conditions at Doral to start the official road to Augusta National.

Woods has plenty of work to do based on his early performance — a missed 54-hole cut at Torrey Pines in his lone PGA Tour start this year, followed by a dismal performance by his standards at the Dubai Desert Classic, where he tied for 41st.

He conceded that he spent most of his winter break working on his body instead of his golf. Since returning from overseas earlier this month, Woods said he has spent most of his time working on his short game.

Woods isn't the only player coming off a substantial break.

Scott, the defending cham-



Golfer Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland, tees off on the fifth hole during the Pro-Am round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

pion at Augusta, hasn't competed since the Sony Open in Honolulu. He spent the following week on the Big Island, surfing and playing a few casual rounds with his buddies, then killed time on the couch or doing anything not related to golf until it was time to get back to work.

He plans to play three of the next four tournaments. "After three weeks I kind of felt like I needed to start swinging again and started

to get the itch, but I think I timed it pretty well because I've had a nice couple weeks of intense practice before getting here and a week of playing with some mates before that," Scott said.

PGA National looks to have as much blue (water) as green (grass), and the course is converted into a par 70 at 7,140 yards for the Honda Classic. Michael Thompson won last year at 9-under 271.

It wouldn't seem to favor Mickelson, who has not played PGA National since he was an amateur.

Mickelson missed the last two weeks because his kids were on spring break, spending some of that time skiing and some of that playing golf. He did not want to fly out from California for one tournament next week at Doral, so he added the Honda Classic. "The greens are really immaculate," Mickelson said. "If you get hot with a putter, you can make a lot of putts. But I do like the golf course. I've always liked Nicklaus-designed golf courses."

This is only the third time Woods has played the Honda Classic as a pro. He rallied with a 62 in the final round in 2012 to finish behind McIlroy, and then struggled off the tee — particularly on the sixth hole — a year ago when he tied for 37th.

McIlroy has his own set of memories from PGA Na-

tional, not all of them good. Even though he won in 2012 to become No. 1 in the world for the first time, he followed that by playing 26 holes last year before walking off the course with his game in disrepair and his business affairs not much better.

McIlroy said it was a mistake to quit, something he won't ever do again. But the 24-year-old from Northern Ireland is in a better frame of mind this year. He is comfortable with his equipment.

He's engaged. He has settled into his own management (though he still is going through a legal battle with his old firm). And he is playing like the guy everyone expected to be the biggest threat to Woods.

"I'm in a better place," McIlroy said. "And I feel like when my game is in a good place, everything else can sort of fall in line with that. It makes me feel more comfortable about everything." □

Ehrhoff scores 2 as Sabres beat Hurricanes 3-2



Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller stays focused on an incoming Carolina Hurricanes shot during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Buffalo, N.Y., Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014.

Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) - Ryan Miller was more concerned about overcoming jetlag than thinking about providing a memorable send-off in what could potentially have been one of the goalie's final games for the Buffalo Sabres.

A little over a day after returning to Buffalo from the Sochi Games, and with his future uncertain, Miller stopped 36 shots and even contributed to the offense with two assists in a 3-2 win over the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night in the NHL's first game after its Olympic break.

"I wasn't really getting to far ahead or thinking about that kind of stuff," Miller said when asked about his future.

Before the game, general manager Tim Murray acknowledged he's shopping the goalie with the intention of dealing him before the league's trade deadline on March 5. Miller is on the block because he's in the final year of his contract, and Murray is unsure whether the 33-year-old is prepared to re-sign with a

team that's rebuilding through youth.

"I'm trying to take the approach to take things as they come right now and be positive and play hockey," Miller added. "It's a lot of fun to play and win. I'm going to try to enjoy these kind of moments where you can help make a difference."

Despite feeling "a little bit goofy" from jetlag, Miller was certainly the difference by stopping the first 20 shots he faced in a game in which Buffalo was outshot 38-18.

"It just shows what kind of goaltender we have in Ryan Miller," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "I don't think we had too much reason to say we were the better team tonight outside of Ryan Miller stealing that game for us."

Christian Ehrhoff scored twice, including the go-ahead goal with 44 seconds left. Tyler Ennis also scored for Buffalo, which snapped a four-game skid, and won for only the third time in its past 14 games (3-8-3).

Both of Miller's assists came on Ehrhoff's goals. That made him the NHL's

first goalie to have that many since Vancouver's Cory Schneider had two in a 5-4 overtime loss to Tampa Bay on Dec. 11, 2010, according to STATS. Ehrhoff's decisive goal came after he circled the Hurricanes' net, and then stopped and spun in the right circle, where he attempted to feed the puck through the crease to teammate Marcus Follino. The puck instead glanced off the stick of Hurricanes defenseman Justin Faulk and floated in over goaltender Cam Ward.

Eric Staal and Alexander Semin scored for the Hurricanes, who lost to Buffalo in regulation for the first time in seven meetings, dating to a 1-0 loss at Carolina on Nov. 18, 2011. The teams got an early start coming out of the NHL's two-week break. The game was originally scheduled to be played Jan. 9, but postponed after a blizzard hit Buffalo.

Hurricanes coach Kirk Muller found little fault in his team's performance. "Miller was the first star, and there's your answer right there," Muller said. "That was a complete, solid game on our part for 60 minutes. We did everything we had to do." Everything, of course, except score more than Buffalo.

Miller put on a show. Early into the second period, he got a piece of Faulk's snap shot from the left circle, and then recovered in time to turn aside Manny Malhotra's attempt to convert the rebound in front.

Miller had Hurricanes forward Jeff Skinner looking up to the rafters and shaking his head midway through the second period. That reaction came after Skinner got off a hard shot from the right circle on a partial break, only to have Miller snag it with his glove.

"We had a lot of chances," said Staal, who beat Miller through the legs on a 2-on-1 break. "When it's a close game, you have to be able to bury them. And tonight, Miller made a lot of good saves." Following the game, Miller spent time surrounded by fans at the penalty box, where he took part in a television interview. He then got a cheer from the few remaining fans inside the

arena as he headed to the locker room about 10 minutes after the game ended. Whatever might happen over the next week, Miller has enjoyed his 12 years in Buffalo. "I love this area. The fans have always been great," he said. "If it happens that I'm traded, I'm preparing to play somewhere else. It all just comes to it's going to be hockey." □

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FRI 4:10 | 6:45 | 9:20 | 11:55
SAT 2:00 | 4:10 | 6:45 | 9:20 | 11:55
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WILL ARNETT | ELIZABETH BANKS
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about last night
MON-FRI 7:05 R
SAT, SUN & HOL 7:05

ICE CUBE | KEVIN HART
Ride Along
MON - THURS 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:35 PG-13
FRI 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:35 | 11:55
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Lillard leads Trail Blazers past Nuggets 100-95

DENVER (AP) — Damian Lillard made up for the absence of fellow All-Star LaMarcus Aldridge by scoring 31 points in the Portland Trail Blazers' 100-95 win over the Denver Nuggets on Tuesday night.

Lillard scored 12 in the third quarter when it looked as if the Blazers were headed for a blowout win, but he saved his biggest shots for late in the fourth after the Nuggets had trimmed an 18-point deficit to two.

Lillard helped Portland overcome a terrific performance by Denver's J.J. Hickson, who pulled down a career-high 25 rebounds, including 15 on the offensive side. Hickson led the Nuggets to a 64-41 advantage on the glass.

Aldridge missed his fourth straight game with a strained left groin. But the Blazers had six players score in double figures, including Nicolas Batum's 16 points. Randy Foye led Denver with 17 points.

Denver again was without Ty Lawson, who leads the Nuggets with averages of 18 points and 8.8 assists.

He's missed seven straight games with a broken rib.

ROCKETS 129, KINGS 103
SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— James Harden scored a season-high 43 points before resting for all of the fourth quarter, and the Rockets routed the Kings.

Harden helped Houston go ahead by 25 points in the first quarter, 31 in the second and 33 in the third. He shot 11 of 20 from the floor, made 15 of 16 free throws and added eight assists, three steals and two rebounds.

Dwight Howard left briefly after banging his right knee but returned to finish with 20 points and 11 rebounds, and Chandler Parsons had 10 points and eight rebounds for the Rockets, who have won 10 of their last 11 games.

DeMarcus Cousins had 16 points and six rebounds for the Kings before getting ejected for vehemently arguing with an official in the third quarter. He picked up his NBA-leading 14th and 15th technical fouls.

PACERS 118, LAKERS 98

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Paul



Atlanta Hawks head coach Mike Budenholzer reacts as Chicago Bulls shooting guard Kirk Hinrich (12) falls to the floor after being fouled by Hawks' DemArre Carroll in the final moments of the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014, in Atlanta. Hinrich hit all three foul shots and Chicago went on to win 107-103.

Associated Press

George scored 12 of his 20 points in the third quarter, Evan Turner had 13 points in his Pacers debut, and Indiana improved its league-leading record to 43-13.

Kent Bazemore finished with a career-high 23 points and Jodie Meeks added 15 for the Lakers (19-38), who have the worst record in the West. The loss also

ended Los Angeles' three-game winning streak at Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

Greinke

Continued from page 18

"It's a long trip for us," said projected starter Dan Haren, who has a dressing stall next to Greinke's in the Dodgers spring training clubhouse. "But we have to think of the game. The actual trip will be a lot to handle, especially for the starting pitchers."

Arizona and the Dodgers opened their training camps about a week before the other 28 big league clubs.

"This is not a normal spring for us," Dodgers manager Don Mattingly said Tuesday.

Because of the trip, the Dodgers are scheduled for about half of their usual total of spring training games. And they may alter their rotation.

While two-time NL Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw and Greinke are their top two starters, Mattingly might not want them to get that many innings early with starts in both Australia and San Diego. Kershaw in theory could line up to start the season opener, the North

The Lakers stayed closer than expected through the first 2½ quarters and trailed just 59-58 early in the third. But George then scored 10 points in a decisive 14-5 spurt that gave Indiana an 80-68 lead with 2:58 to go in the period.

George had seven rebounds and six assists despite spending the entire fourth quarter on the bench with most of Indiana's starters.

BULLS 107, HAWKS 103

ATLANTA (AP) — Mike Dunleavy scored 22 points and Joakim Noah had 20 points and 12 rebounds, helping the Bulls hold on for the road win.

Carlos Boozer had 17 points and 11 rebounds for Chicago, and Kirk Hinrich scored 14 points, including six free throws in the final 44 seconds. □

Tanaka expects scrutiny of 1st exhibition outing

TAMPA, Florida (AP) — Masahiro Tanaka knows that his first appearance in a spring training game for the New York Yankees will be scrutinized.

Tanaka and Hiroki Kuroda will follow starter CC Sabathia in Saturday's game against Philadelphia at Steinbrenner Field. All three are expected to throw two innings or 35 pitches.

"Obviously, I understand that some of the people are just going to look at the numbers of the game that I'm pitching in, but I'm not really too focused and worried about that," Tanaka said Wednesday through an interpreter.

Tanaka signed a \$155 million, seven-year contract



New York Yankees starting pitcher Masahiro Tanaka throws a pitch during spring training baseball practice Friday, Feb. 21, 2014, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press

in January. He was 24-0 with a 1.27 ERA last year while leading the Rakuten Golden Eagles to their first

Japan Series title.

"I feel that I'm getting into the rhythm, used to things," Tanaka said. □

American opener and the Dodgers' home opener against San Francisco on April 4.

Mattingly said he won't start Kershaw in all three.

"I'll pitch when they tell me to," said Kershaw, who is scheduled to start Wednesday's exhibition opener against Arizona in Scottsdale.

Mattingly said 10 days ago he will monitor the workload of Kershaw, who agreed last month to a \$215 million, seven-year contract, the largest deal for a pitcher. Kershaw pitched a career-high 259 1-3 innings last season, including the playoffs. Mattingly does say Josh Beckett won't make the trip. Beckett is fighting to reclaim his spot in the starting rotation after surgery in July to alleviate a nerve problem that affected his right hand. He had a rib and muscle tissue removed.

"I'm hoping we're going to feel a sense of urgency, make sure our minds are right," Mattingly said. "It's not like we're starting tomorrow and we have 37 spring games to play. 'We've got 19 games and then a game that counts.' □

Incentives are coming for payments by phones

ANICK JESDANUN

AP Technology Writer

BARCELONA, Spain (AP)

— Many people use their smartphones to watch video, play games and wake them up in the morning. Some even use them to generate digital boarding passes to fly. So why not use phones to buy stuff at retail stores as well?

A variety of mobile wallet systems store credit or debit card information on phones in encrypted form, offering more security than standard plastic cards with magnetic stripes. To make a purchase, simply tap the phone on a card reader or wave a bar code over a scanner. There's convenience in not having to fish out your card.

Yet most people still prefer plastic.

Mobile payments have perpetually "been 18 months away from being big," said Kebbie Sebastian, managing director of Penser Consulting, a London-based payments advisory firm. Use has been limited to a handful of retail stores, vending machines and transit systems around the world. A 2013 report from the Federal Reserve in the U.S. said only 6 percent of smartphone users had made such a payment within the previous year.

That isn't stopping proponents from making yet another push this week at the Mobile World Congress wireless show in Barcelona, Spain.

Visa and MasterCard both plan to let phones with near-field communication chips, or NFC, access card information over the Internet. Before, the data had to be stored on a secured part of the phone and required the cooperation of device makers and mobile operators, which had competing payment systems.

Samsung, meanwhile, said its new Galaxy S5 smartphone will allow people to authenticate PayPal transactions with a fingerprint rather than a passcode. It comes as PayPal works on equipping merchants with wireless sensors so that repeat customers can pay while leaving their phones



A man uses a mobile device for payment at the Mobile World Congress, the world's largest mobile phone trade show in Barcelona, Spain, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014. The global wireless show that wraps up on Thursday has seen a push to get mobile devices cheap enough to reach emerging markets without sacrificing so much performance. While the affluent crave the latest iPhones or Android phones, most of the world can't afford the hundreds of dollars they cost.

Associated Press

in the pocket.

And a startup called Loop-Pay recently released an iPhone app that works with a phone case or attachment to imitate the magnetic signals that regular cards produce when swiped. This way, retailers can accept app payments with standard card readers.

One of the biggest obstacles has been the lack of readers that retailers can use to accommodate mobile payments.

Avivah Litan, a security analyst at Gartner, said that's changing as U.S. merchants face a 2015 deadline to accept cards with security chips, which are currently more common in Europe than in the United States. That's when Visa will shift some of the liability for fraudulent transactions to the merchant. Retailers are upgrading card readers as a result, and those typically come with NFC technology.

But there's still a question of which NFC system to accept. A merchant often must enable its checkout system for one or more payment types.

Google has Wallet, while Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile are working jointly on Isis. Visa has tools for merchants



The new Samsung Galaxy S5 is displayed at the Mobile World Congress, the world's largest mobile phone trade show in Barcelona, Spain, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014.

Associated Press

and banks to build apps for consumers to make payments. MasterCard plans guidelines soon. Several retailers including Walmart, Target and 7-Eleven are collaborating on a separate phone app for consumers to pay.

Beyond NFC, an app from the startup Square uses the phone's location technology, such as GPS. The cashier sees a list of Square users nearby and picks the one with the customer's photo to complete the payment. Starbucks accepts Square, but also has its own app that generates a bar code tied to a customer's Starbucks loyalty card.

PayPal's system is similar to Square.

Even if these competing

systems are made compatible with one another, consumers will need persuasion.

Security is the chief reason Americans resist mobile payments, according to the Federal Reserve study, although many people also fail to see any benefit. "In the United States, carrying a credit card is not considered an inconvenience," said G.V. Kumar, CEO of Xius, a mobile payments technology company in North Chelmsford, Mass.

Where mobile payments have been more successful is in emerging markets, where credit cards aren't as widespread.

Payment systems there allow people to charge

goods and services to their phone bills. In Kenya, a mobile service called M-Pesa became an easy and cheap way for people to send money to one another, Sebastian said.

As for security, it's mostly a matter of addressing misconceptions.

Despite consumers' fears, mobile systems typically offer more security than standard cards. Plastic cards have visible numbers that unscrupulous waiters can jot down. Lose one, and you must call the card's issuer to cancel. Mobile apps can be set up to require passcodes, and cards can be removed remotely.

Sam Shrauger, a Visa executive for digital services, said phone apps can also facilitate one-time card numbers, which won't work for additional transactions. That could help reduce fraud should a merchant's computers get hacked, though experts aren't sure the recent breaches at Target and other retailers will be enough to push consumers into believing mobile payments are safer.

Matthew Talbot, senior vice president for mobility with the German technology services company SAP AG, said new technologies always take time to gain acceptance.

He noted that ATMs and Internet banking faced similar fears early on.

Beyond security, mobile payments will need to offer something unavailable with standard credit cards. For instance, they could incorporate retailers' loyalty programs and offer deals based on past purchases and the phone's location.

At the Barcelona show, customers who order and pay for lunch with PayPal ahead of time are able to get on an express line to pick up their orders. A coffee shop with long lines every morning can also enable PayPal's technology.

"It's not about payments. It's not the technology. It's about solving real consumer problems," said Anuj Nayar, senior director for global initiatives with eBay Inc.'s PayPal business. □

American bank earnings rise 17% as loan losses fall

MARCY GORDON

AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. banks' earnings rose 17 percent in the October-December quarter from

enberg said the latest results showed "a continuation of the recovery in the banking industry." At the same time, he said, the industry still faces challeng-

es including only modest growth in lending, narrow profit margins and a decline in mortgage refinancing business as long-term interest rates have risen.

Bank's lending increased modestly in the fourth quarter, as it has in recent periods. Total loan balances increased by \$90.9 billion, or 1.2 percent, from the third quarter of 2013, with credit card loans marking a seasonal increase of 2.1 percent.

Community banks continued to post significant lending to small businesses, accounting for 46 percent of the industry's loans to small farms and businesses, the FDIC said.

James Chessen, chief economist at the American Bankers Association, said lending growth is expected to be strong this year, with loans to individuals increasing about 7 percent and business loans rising around 8 percent.

"Banks are a reflection of the economy," Chessen said in a statement. "Demand for credit will grow as new jobs are created, incomes rise and business confidence returns."

Banks with assets exceeding \$10 billion drove the bulk of the earnings growth in the October-December period. While they make up just 1.5 percent of U.S. banks, they accounted for about 82 percent of industry earnings.

Those banks include Bank of America Corp., Citigroup Inc., JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Wells Fargo & Co. Most of them have recovered with help from federal bailout money during the financial crisis and record-low borrowing rates. □



A Bank of America sign is displayed in Philadelphia. US banks' earnings rose 17% in the October-December quarter from a year earlier, as losses on loans fell to a seven-year low.

(AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

a year earlier, as losses on loans fell to a seven-year low and banks set aside less to cover losses as well as legal costs.

The data provides fresh evidence of the banking industry's sustained recovery more than five years after the financial crisis struck. Still, the government says banks continue to have difficulty increasing revenues, and are relying on setting aside less for loan losses to boost earnings.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. reported Wednesday that the banking industry earned \$40.3 billion in the final quarter of 2013, up from \$34.4 billion in the same period in 2012. For all of 2013, bank earnings increased 9.6 percent to what the agency calls a record annual level of \$154.7 billion. It exceeded the previous record earnings of \$145.2 billion in 2006. The number of banks on the FDIC's "problem" list fell to 467 in the final quarter of 2013 from 515 in the third quarter.

Banks' losses on loans dropped 36.7 percent to \$11.7 billion, the lowest level for a fourth quarter since 2006, the FDIC said. The largest decline came in home mortgages, which posted a 57.7 percent drop in losses.

FDIC Chairman Martin Gru-

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The stock market is struggling to take it to the next level. For a third straight day the Standard & Poor's 500 index traded above its record close but fell back to end below it. An early move higher Wednesday was led by retailers and home builders, but the gains mostly petered out in the afternoon. By the closing bell the index was up just a fraction of a point. After rebounding from losses early in the year, when investors were concerned about the outlook for growth in emerging markets and the U.S., the stock market now appears to be at a crossroads.

While investors seem comfortable attributing the recent weakness in economic reports to the unusually cold weather, they also appear reluctant to push stocks higher before they see more evidence of growth.

"This is a market that has been trying to decipher how much of the negative news is weather-based, against concerns that we have moved into a soft patch," said Quincy Krosby, a market strategist at Prudential Financial.

Stocks edge higher; S&P 500 ends shy of record

The S&P 500 edged up four-hundredths of a point to close at 1,845.16, three points short of its record high close of 1,848.38 set Jan. 15. The index climbed as high as 1,852.65. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 18.75, or 0.1 percent, to 16,198.41. The

fastest pace in more than five years. That's a hopeful sign after a slowdown in the housing market last year caused by higher interest rates. PulteGroup rose 57 cents, or 2.8 percent, to \$21.25 and Lennar rose \$1.52, or 3.6 percent, to \$43.78.

the most recent quarter as the home-improvement retailer continued to benefit from a recovery in the housing market. The company also announced a new \$5 billion stock repurchase program.

Abercrombie & Fitch jumped \$4.05, or 11.3



Olympic skeleton silver medalist Noelle Pikus-Pace, with her husband Jason Pace and their children Traycen, center, and Lacee, visit the post of specialist Christopher Culhane, left, on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, after ringing the opening bell, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014.

(AP Photo/Ben Hider, NYSE)

Nasdaq composite rose 4.48 points, or 0.1 percent, to 4,292.06. Home builder stocks rose sharply after the government reported that U.S. sales of new homes jumped in January at the

Retailers rose after several encouraging earnings reports.

Lowe's climbed \$2.61, or 5.4 percent, to \$50.72. The company's net income rose 6 percent in

percent, to \$40.04 after posting earnings that exceeded the expectations of Wall Street analysts. The retailer also initiated a \$150 million accelerated share buyback program. □

Airbus Group posts higher 2013 profit

GREG KELLER

Associated Press

TOULOUSE, France (AP) —

European jetmaker Airbus Group said Wednesday record demand for its civilian jetliners from airlines around the world drove higher sales and profits last year.

The Boeing Co. rival, known until this year as EADS, said net profit rose 22 percent to 1.47 billion euros (\$2 billion) in 2013, up from 1.2 billion euros the previous year. The company, which competes with Boeing in the multi-billion-dollar market for large civilian aircraft, forecast jet deliveries to remain at about the same level this year as last year when it sold 626 aircraft.

"We're not planning new adventures in 2014, the focus is on execution, execution," Chief Executive Tom Enders said at a press conference.

Enders said that while Airbus will "take a little break" this year in terms of production, after 11 straight years of growth, he predicted orders will remain higher than deliveries. Last year Airbus took in a record 1,619 new orders.

In a statement, Airbus also announced plans to ramp up production of its single-aisle jets to 46 a month by 2016, from 42 now.

The A320 single aisle family of jets competes with Boeing's 737, and has seen high demand in recent years alongside exceptional growth in the air travel market in developing countries in Asia and the Middle East.

Airbus' earnings came in below the 1.97 billion-euro consensus forecast of analysts surveyed by Factset. The 2013 accounts were dented by higher costs connected to Airbus' new A350 twin-aisle jet, which Airbus hopes to start delivering to customers by the end of this year.

Airbus has received over 820 orders so far for the wide body A350, with around 30 percent coming from Asian airlines. The region is a crucial market for plane makers because its economic growth is driv-



Tom Enders, 2nd right, Airbus Group CEO, Rainer Ohler, left, head of Communications, Marwan Lahoud, Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer, 2nd left, and Harald Wilhelm, Chief Financial Officer, attend the Airbus Group 2013 results presentation during a press meeting at the Radisson Blue Hotel near Toulouse, Southern France, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014.

(AP Photo/Bruno Martin)

ing rapid expansion of jet fleets. Airbus shares rose 1.5 percent in early trading Wednesday on the Paris stock exchange, as investors applauded the group's hitting financial targets including higher operating

profit and better-than-expected free cash flow. Airbus says the A350 program "remains challenging," after it took a 434 million-euro charge against the program in the fourth quarter last year. □

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2 Br Platinum O.F. \$29K
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

201427

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Stu wk 5 Room # 8202 \$7K
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Amsterdam Manor

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201430

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202289

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201068

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contract
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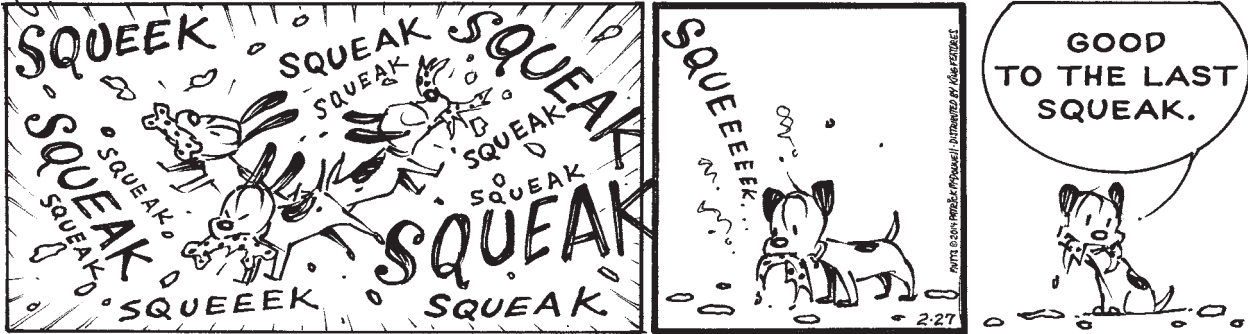
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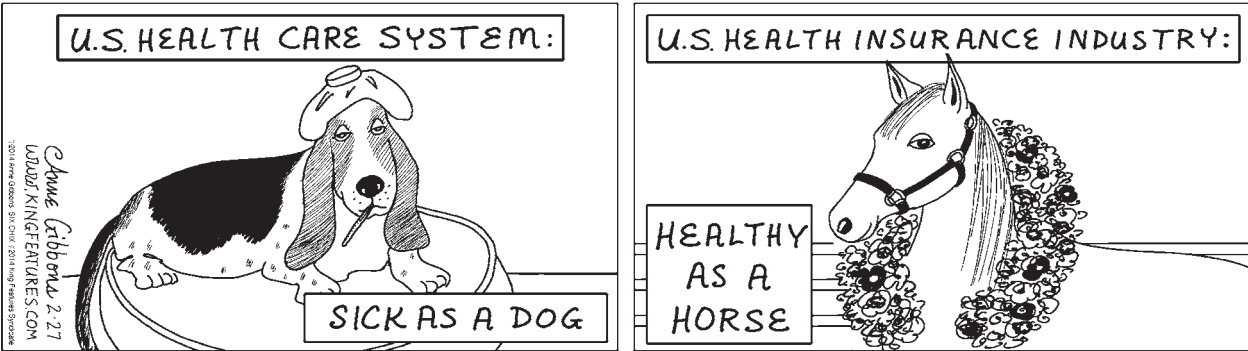
201406



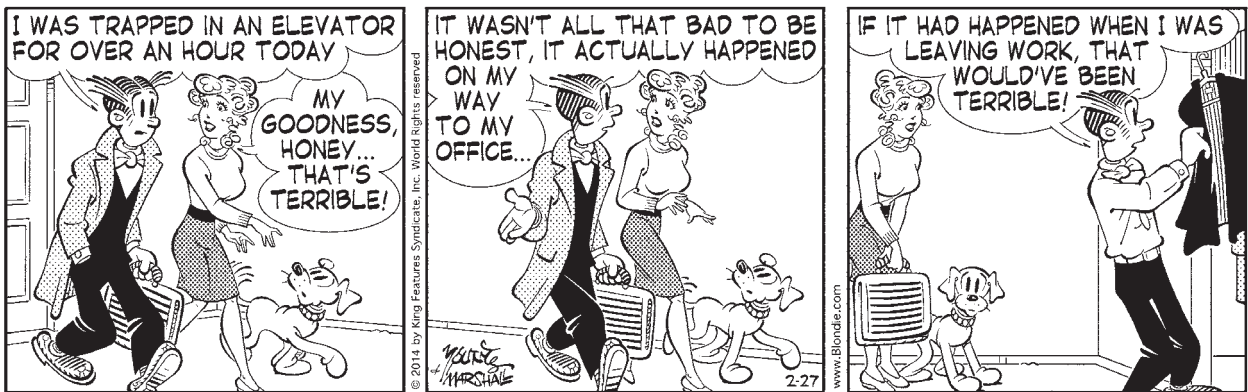
Mutts



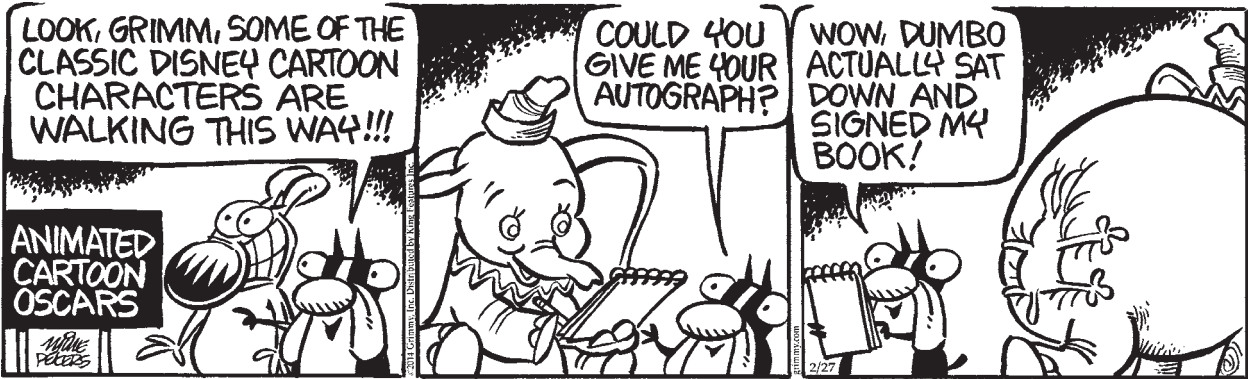
6 Chix



Blondie



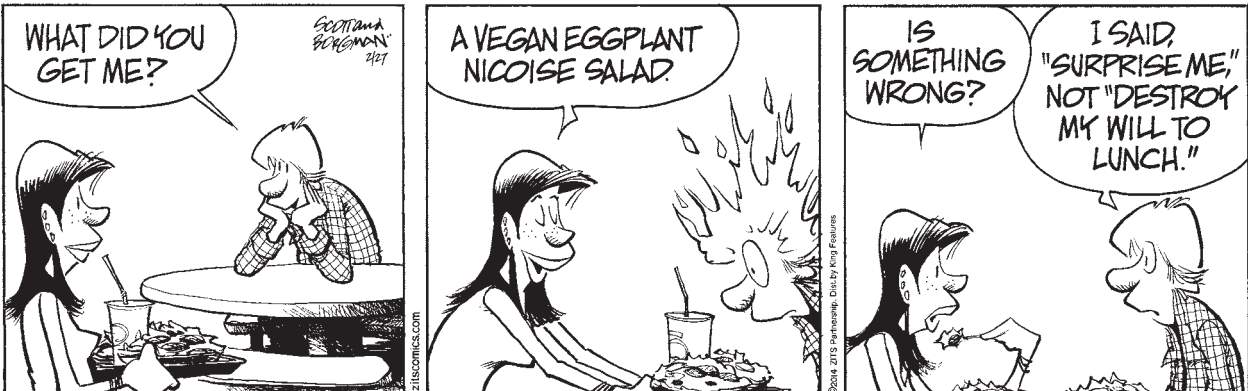
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

9			8			4
		7			2	
	4	3			1	9
			7	6		
6						5
			3	9		
	2	5			9	1
		9			7	
1			3			8

Difficulty Level ★★★

2/27

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

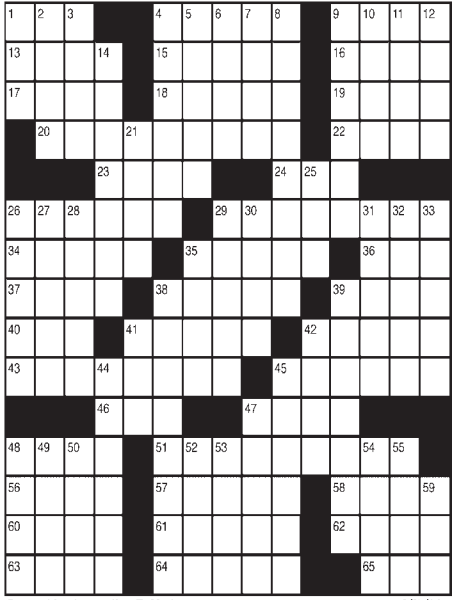
1	5	8	2	7	9	6	3	4
9	6	2	1	4	3	7	5	8
4	7	3	5	6	8	2	1	9
6	9	4	8	1	7	5	2	3
8	2	1	9	3	5	4	6	7
7	3	5	6	2	4	9	8	1
2	8	6	4	9	1	3	7	5
3	1	9	7	5	2	8	4	6
5	4	7	3	8	6	1	9	2

ACROSS

- Holiday ; hotel chain
- Deep hole
- Golfer ; Mickelson
- Harness strap
- Mountainside
- Comfortable wraparound
- Wheel rod
- Sweet granules
- Leave out
- Bring to an end
- State of clutter
- Extensive; wide
- Afternoon rest
- Skillful
- Artist who painted a famous picture of his mother
- Psychoanalyst Sigmund ;
- Vane direction
- Ms. Longoria
- Keep ; on; watch closely
- Actor ; Lee Jones
- if; although
- Flightless bird
- Internal spies
- Fragrance
- Revealed the misdeeds of
- Adjusts a clock
- Obsolete
- Express pent-up frustration
- Pocket bread
- Well-known
- Rowers' items
- Put forth, as effort
- Cleansing bar
- Make booties
- Hose down
- Days of ; yesteryear
- Notice
- Sings with the lips closed
- Embankment
- Special ; big occasion
- Talks wildly
- Song for one
- Little children

DOWN

- Tax-deferred retirement acct.



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

2/27/14

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

JUST	FINAL	FETE
ITCH	ATONE	EVEN
MARE	MASTERMIND	
SHE	WILY	HALTS
WHINY	OIL	
MOBILE	MINERS	
ACADS	PIANO	EW
TALE	KIOSK	PLEA
ELL	FINNS	WHEAT
ASRARE	PRINTS	
ARK	BOAST	
INANE	GULP	LBS
RINGS	ABELL	SEEP
KNEE	LANG	USER
SEWS	FREED	ESPY

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2/27/14

- Pure bliss
- Singer Tillis
- away; dismiss
- Warm & comfy
- Leased to a tenant
- Song division
- Jab
- Somerhalder and McKellen
- Journey
- Way out
- Trait transmitter
- Housetop
- Three feet
- person; apiece

Classifieds

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201426

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201426

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201426

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201426

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Marriott Surf Club
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201426



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201404

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 wk 10 su-su \$7.000
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 week 8 ground floor
 19 weeks non mandatory
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202299

FOR SALE
Divi Phoenix Waterfront Villa
 week 8 ocean front
 2 bdr 3 baths sleeps 8 Unit
 821can be used as week 7&8 or
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201425

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TAXI D.T.S.	587-2300
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CRUISESHIP

Feb 27
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 Tel: 583-8989

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TODAY

ARUBA'S ENGLISH NEWS LEADER AND THE BEST PART OF YOUR DAY

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PROVEN DATA WHO KNOW

How to reach us!

Downtown

STOP
 Violence Against Women

NASA turns research to California drought

SCOTT SMITH

Associated Press

FRESNO, California (AP) —

NASA scientists have begun deploying satellites and other advanced technology to help California water officials assess the state's record drought and better manage it, officials said Tuesday.

The California Department of Water Resources has partnered with NASA to use the space agency's satellite data and other airborne technology to better measure the snowpack, groundwater levels and predict storms.

"It sounds like a cliché, but if they could put a man on the moon, why can't we get better seasonal forecasting?" Jeanine Jones of the state's Department of Water Resources said in an interview following the Sacramento announcement of the partnership.

Now they will. NASA scientists said they are also embarking on projects that use satellite images to help more accurately measure the number of fields farmers



In this Oct. 2, 2009, file photo, a dead almond crop is seen in California's Westland Water District in Fresno, Calif.

have chosen not to plant and where land is sinking because of excessive ground-water pumping.

Gov. Jerry Brown directed state officials to form such partnerships as part of his drought emergency declaration last month.

California's relationship with NASA began shortly

after the dry year of 2009, when officials sought answers to problems exacerbated by the lack of rain and snow, such as the sinking land. This year's drought has made that research all more important, Jones said, adding that the preliminary findings proved that there's plenty more to learn.

Associated Press

NASA geologist Tom Farr said that bringing together all types of research and modern technology like pieces of a puzzle may help those in charge of managing the state's water supply avoid deficit water years like this.

"We're on the verge of being able to put all these

measurements together and start looking at the concept of closing the water budget of California," he said.

Lawrence Friedl, director of NASA's Applied Sciences Program, said that 13 of the agency's satellites are focused on water. Three more water research projects are scheduled by NASA, including a satellite to be launched Feb. 27 with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

Projects NASA is advancing include measuring so-called "atmospheric rivers" to better predict global storm systems farther in advance so rain can be captured in California reservoirs. Satellite images that show the amount of land farmers have chosen not to plant in a drought will arm officials in Sacramento with information about where to open food banks for farm workers.

Satellites technology will help officials identify levees that are prone to break with high volumes of water, scientists said. □

Mexico experts sight endangered 'water monster'



In this Friday, Feb. 21, 2014 photo, a young axolotl swims inside a plastic container at an experimental canal run by Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM) in the Xochimilco network of lakes and canals in Mexico City.

Associated Press

TERESA DE MIGUEL

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's salamander-like axolotl apparently hasn't disappeared from its only known natural habitat in Mexico City's few remaining lakes. Researchers say they have sighted, but not caught, two of the slippery little creatures during a second effort to find them.

A weeklong effort last year by researchers in skiffs trying to net axolotls in the shallow, muddy waters of Xochimilco lake found none, raising fears that they might only now survive in captivity. But biologist Armando Tovar Garza of Mexico's National Autonomous University said Friday that members of the team carrying out the search had seen two axolotls during the first three weeks of a second survey expected to conclude in April.

"We weren't able to capture them ... because the

behavior of the axolotl makes them very difficult to capture," Tovar Garza said. "We haven't had any captures, but we have had two sightings. That's important, because it tells us we still have a chance."

The axolotl, admittedly ugly with a slimy tail, plumage-like gills and mouth that curls into an odd smile, is known as the "water monster" and the "Mexican walking fish." It's only natural habitat is the Xochimilco network of lakes and canals — the "floating gardens" of earth piled on reed mats that the Aztecs built to grow crops but are now suffering from pollution, urban sprawl and invasive species.

The creature is important in scientific research because of its ability to regenerate severed limbs.

Some axolotls still survive in aquariums, water tanks and research labs, but experts said those conditions aren't the best, because

of interbreeding and other risks. Releasing captive-bred axolotls into the wild could spread a fungus infection that is fatal to them and could reduce their genetic diversity. Tovar Garza said some small mutations, possibly the result of interbreeding, have already been seen.

Alarmed by the creature's falling numbers in recent years, researchers built axolotl "shelters" in Xochimilco to help them breed in the cleanest part of their remaining habitat.

Sacks of rocks and reedy plants act as filters around a selected area, and cleaner water is pumped in, to create better conditions. The shelters also include permeable cages and other devices intended to help protect axolotls from non-native carp and tilapia that were introduced to the lake system years ago and compete with axolotls for food. □

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Feared lost, original art of Wolverine debut found

MATT MOORE
Associated Press

The original art for the first appearance of Wolverine — a ferocious fighting mutant with a penchant for beer and cigars — will be auctioned in May in a sale to benefit the Hero Initiative, the group that strives to aid comic book creators in times of financial need.

Heritage Auctions said Wednesday that the artwork drawn by Herb Trimpe 40 years ago for "The Incredible Hulk" No. 180 was long thought lost until the person he gave it to back in 1983 contacted them about selling it. Todd Hignite, Heritage's vice president, said he was astounded to see the full-page art in such pristine condition.

"I went out and met with the owner and it wasn't until I was there and actually saw it that I fully believed it. It's a pretty amazing thing."

The owner, who asked not to be identified, received the art as a gift from Trimpe after he and his family had visited. A comic collector, he brought some issues drawn by Trimpe, hoping for an autograph. Trimpe obliged. As they left, the artist told him to wait.

"He ran back upstairs to his studio and he came with this page of artwork in his hands," Hignite said of ink, graphite and blue drawing. On it was inscribed "Ben — Best Wishes Herb Trimpe."

As Wolverine's appeal and popularity grew — first in Marvel Entertainment's comics, then on animated TV shows and, finally, as played by Hugh Jackman in the ongoing X-Men film franchise — issues featuring the character jumped in value. So, too, has original art.

"He's aware that the market for comic art has gone up to such an incredible amount," Hignite said of the piece. "He was just kind of nervous having the



This image released by Heritage Auctions shows original artwork that was used in the Marvel Comics' "The Incredible Hulk" issue #150.

Associated Press

artwork."

Original art for other significant characters like Superman and Spider-Man have commanded prices well into six figures.

The issue, written by Len Wein and called "And the Wind Howls Wendigo" is valued at \$400 in near-mint condition while issue 181, which is the first, full Wolverine story, is valued at \$1,800 in near-mint condition, per the 43rd Overstreet Comic Price Guide.

The sale May 16 will benefit the Hero Initiative with a majority of the after-tax proceeds going to the nonprofit.

The group has given more than \$500,000 to more than 50 comic book creators since its founding in 2000 to help them with medical bills, housing and more.

"I'm overjoyed to know that it still exists — and even happier that its sale will in part benefit the comics industry's own charity, Hero Initiative, on whose disbursement board I've sat since its founding," said Roy Thomas, who was editor-in-chief at Marvel when Wolverine was created and the issue came out.

"Wolverine was never a do-gooder... but this time he's going to do some good in spite of himself. Take that, Logan!" □

Baldwin becomes meddling newsman on 'Law & Order'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Alec Baldwin is putting a twist on his rocky relationship with the media: He's playing a meddling newspaperman on a NBC drama.

The network said Tuesday that Baldwin guest stars as a New York columnist on "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit." His character questions the motives of police investigating a rape case as a possible hate crime. The episode is directed by series star Mariska Hargitay and airs March 19. NBC says Hargitay's character, police Sgt. Olivia Benson, goes "head to head" with the writer played by Baldwin when his reporting interferes with the investigation. Baldwin has had run-ins with photographers and said in a wide-ranging article for New York magazine that he despises the media and intends to reclaim his privacy. □

In this Oct. 24, 2013 file photo, producer and actor Alec Baldwin attends the HBO premiere of "Seduced and Abandoned" at The Time Warner Center in New York. Associated Press



YouTube ordered to take down anti-Muslim film

PAUL ELIAS
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A U.S. appeals court ordered YouTube on Wednesday to take down an anti-Muslim film that sparked violence in many parts of the Middle East. The decision by a divided three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco reinstated a lawsuit filed against YouTube by an actress who appeared in the video. The 9th Circuit said the YouTube posting infringed actress Cindy Lee Garcia's copyright to her role, and she, not just the filmmaker, could demand its removal. The court's ruling addressed control of the clip, not its contents, which YouTube determined didn't violate its standards. "Garcia's performance was used in a way that she found abhorrent and her appearance in the film subjected her to threats of physical harm and even death," Chief Judge Alex Kozinski wrote for the majority court. "Despite these harms, and de-



This Sept. 20, 2012 file photo shows Cindy Lee Garcia, right, one of the actresses in the film "Innocence of Muslims," and attorney M. Cris Armenta at a news conference before a hearing at Los Angeles Superior Court in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

spite Garcia's viable copyright claim, Google refused to remove the film from YouTube." Garcia said she was duped into appearing in the film by the man behind it, Mark Basseley Youssef. She said the script she saw referenced neither Muslims nor Mohammad, and her voice was dubbed over after filming.

The 14-minute film, "Innocence of Muslims," depicts Mohammad as a religious

fraud, pedophile and womanizer.

It sparked violence in late 2012, but YouTube rebuffed requests from President Barack Obama to take it down, arguing that only the filmmaker and not the actress owned the copyright. The court said the actress owned the copyright to her performance because she thought it was for another film unrelated to what ultimately aired. □

No Oscar nod, no problem: Whitaker works on craft

JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr.
Associated Press

Forest Whitaker isn't much bothered by being one of the season's biggest Oscar snubs.

Although he's won an Academy Award and a Golden Globe, it's always been about the craft for the veteran actor. So repeated comments that he deserved a nomination for his leading role in "Lee Daniels' The Butler" and for "Fruitvale Station," which he co-produced, just roll right off.

"I've been doing this for years and my goal is purely to expand the human experience, to expand myself and connection with other people," he said in a recent phone interview to promote his new film "Repentance." "That's my real goal. It's always nice when people celebrate me or my work. But that's not my real marker. It's seems to be more of a marker for others."

Sure, Whitaker was disappointed that "Fruitvale Station" wasn't among the nine Oscar nominees for best-picture. But he ultimately felt the film didn't need a nomination or an award to validate its success. It was "beautifully done," he says.

"It was some great performances, and I think people did acknowledge my work," he said. "As far as



In this Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014 photo, actor Forest Whitaker, who stars in the upcoming film "Repentance," poses for a portrait in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

nominations, you really just can't allow yourself to get caught up. You just have to see how it flows."

"The Butler," "Fruitvale Station," "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and nine-time nominee "12 Years a Slave" were among last year's bumper crop of acclaimed films about black racial struggles.

While gratified with Hollywood's attention to these issues, Whitaker is hopeful black actors will also be cast in more natural, colorblind roles in films that go

beyond a racial theme or ethnic marketing strategy. "In my career, probably maybe 80 percent of the time, I've been playing characters that had no ethnicity or different culture," Whitaker said. "So I've been lucky."

But there's no question Whitaker's characters have been diverse — from his assassin in 2000's "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai" to his Oscar-winning portrayal of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in 2006's "The Last King of Scotland."

Whitaker took on a new challenge in "Repentance," a psychological thriller in theaters Friday. He plays bipolar Angel Sanchez, who seeks private treatment from a spiritual adviser, then takes him hostage.

It's also one of Whitaker's darkest roles — a "new territory," as he calls it. To prepare, Whitaker talked with mental patients and researched books and articles on the topic.

According to cast mates, Whitaker made it seem

easy.

"He was very focused and specific," said Nicole Ari Parker, who plays Whitaker's wife. "It was almost easy to be in a scene with him because he was so powerful. ... It was wonderful."

So is this a colorblind film? Not exactly. The story is based on Philippe Caland's 2012 film "The Guru and the Gypsy," which featured a cast of mostly white characters. But Whitaker wanted to remake the movie with an all-black cast.

In addition to Whitaker and Parker, it stars Anthony Mackie, Sanaa Lathan and Mike Epps.

"I thought it was a brilliant idea," said Caland, who directed Whitaker in the 2007 film "Ripple Effect."

"It allowed my film to be its own project that became bigger. He helped reinvent my movie rather than remake it."

Caland notes the film not only gave Whitaker an opportunity to portray a character outside his norm, but also allowed co-stars to stretch a bit, too, such as Epps, who is best known as a comedian.

The director said Epps showed he could play a serious role. "He wasn't the obvious choice, but delivered in an amazing way," said Caland. "It was a surprise to everybody." □



In this July 12, 2001 file photo, Spanish guitarist Paco de Lucia performs during the 35th Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland.

Associated Press

CIARAN GILES
Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Paco de

Lucia, one of the world's greatest guitarists who dazzled audiences with his

Spain: Flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia dies at 66

lightning-speed flamenco rhythms and finger work, has died in Mexico, Spanish officials said Wednesday. He was 66.

De Lucia suffered a heart attack while on vacation at the Caribbean beach resort of Playa del Carmen and died in a hospital, Quintana Roo state attorney general Gaspar Armando Garcia told Mexico's Enfoque Radio.

"Paco lived as he wished and died playing with his children beside the sea,"

said a statement from de Lucia's family published on the websites of Spanish newspapers. Describing the death as unexpected and premature, Spanish Education and Culture Minister Jose Ignacio Wert said de Lucia was "a unique and unrepeatable figure." De Lucia — whose real name was Francisco Sanchez Gomez — was best-known for flamenco but also experimented with other musical genres. One of his most famous record-

ings was "Friday Night in San Francisco," recorded with fellow guitarists John McLaughlin and Al Di Meola in 1981.

During the 1960s and 1970s, he formed an extremely popular duo with late flamenco singer legend Camaron de la Isla, with the two working together on 10 records.

His 1973 rumba "Entre Dos Aguas" (Between Two Waters) became one of the most popular recordings in Spain. □

Christie Puts the Gloves On



MAUREEN DOWD
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PORT MONMOUTH, N.J. - There's nothing more amusing than a bully forced to be on his best behavior. Chris Christie may be cutting back on his butter, but it wouldn't melt in his mouth at a town hall here Thursday.

For the first time since his revving ambition stalled in a traffic jam, he returned to the forum that helped vault him to the head of the pack. The New Jersey governor, depicted in The New Republic as Tony Soprano in his underwear getting his paper from the driveway, toned down his tough-guy Jersey act.

The fist-pumping and finger-jabbing were gone at his 110th town hall. As were the swagger, flashes of temper and glossy self-promotional videos. The chastened governor didn't call anyone a "jerk," an "idiot" or "stupid." He even let one guy grab back the microphone that he had confiscated when the question went on too long. Christie pitched his voice in a warm, helpful tone and, in an instamacy Instagram moment, took a knee to high-five a 3-year-old named Nicole Mariano who keened that Sandy broke her house.

He stayed dispassionate even on the most passionate topic. When a military veteran named Joe Williams urged him to destroy his Springsteen CDs - given the Boss' tart parody of Christie's bridge woes with Jimmy Fallon - the governor smiled and said he had the rocker on his iPhone.

Noting that he had been to 132 Springsteen concerts, he said rather wistfully, "Hey, listen, I don't do drugs. I don't drink. This is it for me, OK? It's all I got. I still live in hope that someday, even as he gets older and older, he's gonna wake up and go like, 'Yeah, he's all right. He's a good guy. It's all right. We can be friends.'"

The governor's exit music was Springsteen's "We Take Care of Our Own."

I tend to agree with Bill Maher that Christie is "350 pounds of toast," and that he should have run for president in 2012 when he had "that new candidate smell" because "the longer you stay in the more likely some bad thing will stick to you."

Many Republicans on Capitol Hill, already fed up with Christie's grandstanding on Sandy and his election-eve embrace of President Barack Obama, are casting about for a different presidential contender. The newly constrained Christie is taking a pass on dinner at the White House on Sunday, the better to avoid

another photo op with the president. Americans are so disgusted by political polarization that the minute Christie hugged Obama, he seemed like a white knight.

But in The New Republic, Alec MacGillis argues that the image of Christie as an independent bull in a china shop was never accurate. MacGillis' reporting shows that Christie worked within the state's political machinery at the same time as he was setting himself against it - that his strategy all along was to use his power as a corruption-busting prosecutor to bring down many Democratic officials, even as he cultivated bonds with the Democratic bosses left standing, with their influence enhanced.

As long as there's no smoking traffic cone, there's always the possibility that Christie can muster enough of the old bonhomie and bombast to clamber back to a rarefied perch as a presidential front-runner. His millionaire pals are sticking to him for the moment, and he can keep his new position as chairman of the Republican Governors Association as long as he continues to rake in the dough for the group, no matter how low-key he gets.

To start his comeback, Christie chose a safely red pocket nestled on Sandy Hook Bay in this blue state. And the Jersey residents obliged over the nearly two-hour session by not taking "the governor of New Jersey out for a walk," as Christie calls being confrontational. Questioners stayed mostly on Sandy recovery, tossing out some compliments, and never once directly mentioned the pesky matter of the vindictive lane closures and vivisection of staff.

If you ignored Elizabeth Brady, a Rutgers student and intern for the Monmouth County Democrats, who was outside holding a sign that read "Bruce Springsteen hates you!" and just surveyed the crowd lost in their own issues in the VFW hall, it reminded you of Iowa. And that felt like the point of the exercise, as all the national press swarmed in to see if Christie could escape the house falling on him and resume skipping down the yellow brick road to Iowa. The governor was a beneficiary of America's desperate hunger for genuine leadership. You can blame Obama for the Christie tulip craze. The president has been so wan, he confused people into thinking that bluster was clarity. In a climate with no leadership, the bully looks like a man. If you've only been drinking water, Red Bull tastes like whiskey. Obama's ethereal insipidity made Christie's meaty pugilism attractive; Obama's insistence on the cerebral made voters long for the visceral, even the gracelessly visceral.

George W. Bush was the Decider who engaged in thoughtless action. So America veered toward Obama, who engaged in thoughtful inaction. Then they careered toward Christie, another practitioner of thoughtless action.

When all you have is leading from behind, there's a place in your heart for in-your-face. □



Health Care Horror Hooey



PAUL KRUGMAN
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Remember the "death tax"? The estate tax is quite literally a millionaire's tax - a tax that affects only a tiny minority of the population, and is mostly paid by a handful of very wealthy heirs. Nonetheless, right-wingers have successfully convinced many voters that the tax is a cruel burden on ordinary Americans - that all across the nation small businesses and family farms are being broken up to pay crushing estate tax liabilities.

You might think that such heart-wrenching cases are actually quite rare, but you'd be wrong: They aren't rare; they're nonexistent. In particular, nobody has ever come up with a real modern example of a family farm sold to meet estate taxes. The whole "death tax" campaign has rested on eliciting human sympathy for purely imaginary victims.

And now they're trying a similar campaign against health reform. I'm not sure whether conservatives realize yet that their Plan A on health reform - wait for Obamacare's inevitable collapse, and reap the political rewards - isn't working. But it isn't. Enrollments have recovered strongly from the law's disastrous startup; in California, which had a working website from the beginning, enrollment has already exceeded first-year projections. The mix of people signed up so far is older

than planners had hoped, but not enough so to cause big premium hikes, let alone the often-predicted "death spiral."

And conservatives don't really have a Plan B - in their world, nobody even dares mention the possibility that health reform might actually prove workable. Still, you can already see some on the right groping toward a new strategy, one that relies on highlighting examples of the terrible harm Obamacare does. There's only one problem: they haven't managed to come up with any real examples. Consider several recent ventures on the right:

- In the official GOP response to the State of the Union address, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers alluded to the case of "Bette in Spokane," who supposedly lost her good health insurance coverage and was forced to pay nearly \$700 more a month in premiums. Local reporters located the real Bette, and found that the story was completely misleading: her original policy provided very little protection, and she could get a much better plan for much less than the claimed cost.

- In Louisiana, the AstroTurf (fake grass-roots) group Americans for Prosperity - the group appears to be largely financed and controlled by the Koch brothers and other wealthy donors - has been running ads targeting Sen. Mary Landrieu. In these ads, we see what appear to be ordinary Louisiana residents receiving notices telling them that their insurance policies have been canceled because of Obamacare. But the people in the ads are, in fact, paid actors, and the scenes they play aren't re-enactments of real events - they're "emblematic," says a spokesman for the group.

- In Michigan, Americans for Prosperity is running an ad that does feature a real person. But is she telling a real story? In the ad, Julia Boonstra, who is suffering from leukemia, declares that her

insurance has been canceled, that the new policy will have unaffordable out-of-pocket costs, and that "If I do not receive my medication, I will die." But Glenn Kessler of The Washington Post tried to check the facts, and learned that thanks to lower premiums she will almost surely save nearly as much if not more than she will be paying in higher out-of-pocket costs. A spokesman for Americans for Prosperity responded to questions about the numbers with bluster and double-talk - this is about "a real person suffering from blood cancer, not some neat and tidy White House PowerPoint."

Even supporters of health reform are somewhat surprised by the right's apparent inability to come up with real cases of hardship. Surely there must be some people somewhere actually being hurt by a reform that affects millions of Americans. Why can't the right find these people and exploit them?

The most likely answer is that the true losers from Obamacare generally aren't very sympathetic. For the most part, they're either very affluent people affected by the special taxes that help finance reform, or at least moderately well-off young men in very good health who can no longer buy cheap, minimalist plans. Neither group would play well in tear-jerker ads.

No, what the right wants are struggling average Americans, preferably women, facing financial devastation from health reform. So those are the tales they're telling, even though they haven't been able to come up with any real examples.

Hey, I have a suggestion: Why not have ads in which actors play Americans who have both lost their insurance thanks to Obamacare and lost the family farm to the death tax? I mean, once you're just making stuff up, anything goes. □



A Midweek Outing to the Cape

Fish chowder from a recipe with some flavor tweaks, like vermouth and paprika, in New York. When making a fish chowder with less than ideal ingredients, you can experiment with tweaks to add flavor.

(Evan Sung/The New York Times)

MELISSA CLARK
© 2014 New York

A bare-bones fish chowder, made with little more than milk, potatoes and a good amount of thick-cut bacon, is one of those classic recipes that seems foolish to mess with. Made with a fish you've just caught, it's the New England ideal, with rich, creamy milk and a fish stock you prepared from the head and bones of the day's catch. But then there are the fish chowders I've made with less-pristine ingredients: day-old fish, supermarket fish stock, regular sliced bacon. These chowders are good, too, but less authentic and more open to flavorful tweaks. For example, in this recipe, I tried to keep the simplicity of the original while increasing the flavor profile. So I stirred in a little vermouth for brightness (you can use white wine instead) and a touch of hot smoked paprika for smoky complexity and a mild heat. Of course, if you can use just-caught fish and home-

made fish stock here, it will be all the better. But even when made with supermarket ingredients, it's got the richness and balance of the classic recipe. And it's easy enough for a weeknight meal reminiscent of the shore.

SMOKY FISH CHOWDER
Time: 40 minutes
Yield: 3 to 4 servings
3 ounces bacon (about 3 to 4 slices), diced
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 medium leeks, white and light-green parts, thinly sliced

3/4 teaspoon kosher salt, more as needed
1/4 teaspoon hot smoked paprika
1/4 cup dry white vermouth or white wine
2 cups fish stock
1/2 pound fingerling potatoes, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds

3 thyme sprigs
2 cups whole milk
10 ounces flaky white fish, such as flounder or cod, cut into 2-inch chunks
1. In a heavy pot over medium-high heat, brown bacon until crisp, about 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer bacon to a paper-towel-lined plate to drain.
2. Spoon off all but 2 tablespoons of bacon fat from the pot. Add butter and let melt. Add leeks and a pinch of salt; cook, stirring frequently, until leeks are soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in paprika; cook 1 minute. Pour in vermouth and simmer until almost completely evaporated, about 2 minutes. Stir in stock, 1 cup water, potatoes, thyme and remaining salt. Simmer until potatoes are tender, about 25 minutes.
3. Add milk and cooked bacon to pot; bring to a simmer. Add fish and cook until just opaque, 2 to 4 minutes. Use a fork to flake fish into large pieces. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Remove thyme. Serve immediately. □



Fresh cod is prepared for fish chowder in New York.

(Handout Photo)